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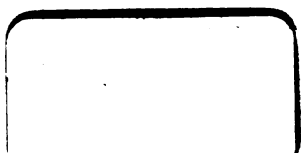
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BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP

Pastor of the Unitarian Congregational Church, Syracuse, N. Y.

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## PRAYER.

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“Ask, and it shall be given to you.”—MATT. vii. 7.

THE doom of the pendulum seems sometimes to have befallen religious thought. We are sometimes tempted mournfully to ask: “Is it really a fate, a fore-ordained necessity, this perpetual oscillation from one extreme to the other? Will no religious community ever rest, even in idea, in the absolute perfect, avoiding all excess on the one hand and defect on the other?” Such questions as these have no more pointed illustration than this one of men’s thoughts and attitude concerning prayer, or communion with God. The creed of old Orthodoxy was Calvinism; that is, an iron, unrelenting Fate holds the universe in its terrible grasp. What is to be will be. In this view, prayer to God, theoretically, would be as useless as prayer to the forces of gravitation. From all eternity everything is irrevocably fixed and decreed. Prayer, then, is as idle wind; but, practically, the iron creed allowed a tremendous latitude to prayer. Prayer was omnipotent. It moved the arm that moved the universe. True, you must pray exactly according to a fixed formula; but, that condition fulfilled, the power of prayer was practically infinite. On the other hand, liberal Christians, so called, while rejecting Calvinism as a creed, are too



often very Calvinists in their thought of prayer. The old fatalism crops out again, only it now christens itself pure science, not Westminster Catechism. "How can this tremendous necessity, with its hand of iron under its glove of silk, be turned from its grand yet relentless purpose by a mortal's prayer? What must be must be. The laws of the universe are unalterable. Man can no more change the sweep of their tremendous orbit than he can bind or turn aside the path of the stars." "What's in a name?" The benumbing effect is still there. The old foe has only got a new face.

We have, then, work enough to do inside our own communion. To-day we shut out of this temple of God all controversy with our fellows. To-day we shut ourselves in with God's controversy with us. Let us see how far short we ourselves come of God's glory in this thing, and how we ourselves must come nearer the eternal fact. Too many liberal Christians feel themselves "on the fence" in this matter. While this is so, not many shining examples will come forth from among us. He who knows not the might and power of communion with God is simply incapable of living the highest life. Too many of us stand in simply a negative position. They have given up certain orthodox ideas about prayer. They have as yet put nothing positive in their place. Too few of us are adding any positive contribution to those splendid experiments on the nature of God and the laws of the reception of the blessed life which all nations and all ages have given in their use of this mighty engine of prayer. Read, if you can, without

tears, in the Egyptian prayer-book those agonized cries of the heart, inscribed on every sarcophagus wherein their dead are enshrined. Listen to their prayer for light and guidance, their breathless hope of a glorious immortality, their longing after a perfect and sinless purity. Follow the stream of supplication through that land of Palestine where it flowed through the green pastures where the Psalmist found the Lord his shepherd, where it flowed past Isaiah's feet, bearing on its bosom the ships of many lands afar, until it flows into the ocean of divine love itself, when it bursts forth afresh, a mighty fountain, from the heart of Jesus. Follow it on till it floods the world, and all nations kneel to one common Father, and it will be strange indeed to you if to-day prayer is to be sought not by joining in this mighty stream of prayer, but by seeking to dry up its fountains.

Here, as elsewhere in our religious life, we shall find that an intellectual difficulty is at the bottom of much of our perplexity.

None of us wish to be defrauded of any legitimate power which life can gain; but what puzzles our brain and hinders our experiments is just this question: "What is the use of prayer? for how can prayer alter the laws of the universe?"

"What is prayer?" is the first question. I presume that the best answer would be, "Communion in all moods and hours of the finite with the Infinite Life."

The Infinite Life surrounds our lives; and intercourse with that which surrounds us is not only pos-

sible, but inevitable. The influence of environment is getting to be a truism of science.

It should not be difficult to hold communion daily with the grandest outward facts of our environment. Air and sky, sun and star, day and night, are around us. They are "parts of His ways." The changing seasons,—the hope and promise of the spring, the glory of summer, the wealth of autumn, and the pure whiteness of winter, where Nature sleeps to wake again,—the green grass, the rustling leaves, the quiet woods, the beauty of flowers, the bounty of the harvest field,—all these things are around us; and that mind is indeed defrauded of its inheritance which does not hold communion with these. If the sunset clouds bring to you no message, if the evening star sheds no radiance on your spirit, if the still heavens of midnight bring no answering peace to your heart, then you are so far cut off from communion with Him whose invisible things are clearly seen by the things that are made.

There is no moment in which you cannot at least say this: "Standing on my feet, I feel the mighty pull of the earth. I draw in my breath, and the all-nourishing air comes in to refresh me. A thousand mighty forces, known and unknown, surround me as I stand here, aid me to stand here. The landscape and my eye are strangely fitted to each other. The Bounty that feeds the cattle on a thousand hills is at this moment sustaining me also."

"But how can you call all this communion with God?" Your question shows that you are not yet wholly inside the new age. Complete communion

with God is communion with all that is. No mortal man or woman is at present capable of this complete communion; but the more things you commune with, have right relations to, the greater is your communion with God. The more of the creation you love, the more like God do you so far become.

It hardly needs to be said that this is but a small part of divine communion, except, perhaps, to the most poetic minds; but it is a part which greatly needs to be developed, though it scarcely touches upon conduct, and then only indirectly. But it will aid us if it begets some sense of the vast extent of our possible communion. To be in perfect touch with our whole environment is the goal to be aimed at. Of course, the moral part of our environment is infinitely the most important to us as human beings. We are "beset, behind and before," with the Infinite Right, Truth, and Good; and to have true and fruitful relations with that is "the one thing needful." Aspirations after purity and stainless honor, after helpfulness and burden-bearing, after rectitude and tender sympathy with our fellows, are immeasurably more important to us than the most poetic sense of nearness to God in nature, more important even than a most overflowing gratitude for the divine bounty in nature. But the perfect man — that is, the angel — has both.

If you say, "I hardly think that I am capable of divine communion. I am sure that I cannot pray always." Certainly not, if to pray always means to be always saying prayers. But I insist that you can always struggle toward right relations with things

and people, with nature and mankind. The more minds you actively sympathize with, the liker God do you become. He that actively sympathizes with all men is at one with God, the savior of all men. The effort to do this is always a prayer. To me the word "communion" is the best single term for all this. To most of us it means much more than the word "prayer." If we use the latter, we must do so in no narrow signification.

It may, however, help to clear our thought if we look at some other definitions of prayer, especially if we want to find the root of some modern perplexities.

1. "Prayer," says Emerson, "is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul." "God *is* our refuge and strength" is grander than "O God, be thou our refuge and strength." "The Lord *is* my shepherd. I *shall* not want." Or with Wasson we may say, "I only ask that God be God." "Sweeter than my wish, his will."

2. But still this is also prayer,—

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead thou me on;  
The night is dark, and I am far from home,  
Lead thou me on,"—

and is as fitting to one mood of the soul as the jubilant soliloquy is to another. To pray "Guide thou my feet" is surely the right attitude, when guidance is needed. The prayer of Jesus, when he rose before the dawn, after the first exciting and trying day of his ministry, was without doubt for light on a hidden way.

3. "*Laborare est orare*,"—"To labor is to pray." In a century as active as this thousands of noble souls pray consciously only by working for the cause of God and man on the earth.

4. "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Uttered or unexpressed."

This seems fairly to include the first two, though hardly the third. What can we say?

5. Will this be nearer? "Prayer is the intending of the whole mind to the gaining strength for living the noblest life." This will include aspiring action as well as noble desire, lofty feeling, or passionate repentance.

Taking this definition, does any one ask, "What is the use of prayer? for how can prayer alter the laws of the universe?"

Supposing that you asked, "What is the use of study? for how can study alter the laws of the universe?" Study is the intending the mind on some department of human knowledge; and the result of study, wisely directed, is the comprehending of that knowledge, the getting possession of a new series of truths in science, history, or what not. Does the triumphant result of study alter the laws of the universe? No. One of the laws of that universe is that prolonged intention of mind on any study tends to generate knowledge of that study. The fact that studying chemistry gives the mind insight does not alter the laws of the universe. It illustrates the laws of the universe. 'Tis the same in all departments. Study mathematics, and, in strict accordance with

the laws of the universe, mathematical insight will be your reward.

This is shown on a grand scale in the history of nations. Do you suppose that Greece, Rome, Judea, became famous for thought, government, religion, by chance? Oh, no. Greece for hundreds of years persistently set herself the task of developing the mind of man; and the inevitable result of this persistency, continued from generation to generation, was that thought at last became organized in Grecian brains, that perceptions of beauty, order, harmony, became hereditary at last. So Rome for hundreds of years persistently set herself to work to study the firm foundation on which to build the state; and the result was that Rome gave law, as Greece gave thought, to the world. So Judea. From Moses to Jesus is well-nigh fourteen hundred years. During that period the Hebrew race gave its best energies to the discovery of perfect religion, to the investigation of the laws of the soul and its sublime relations with God. No persistency so grand as this. For a time visions of earthly splendor may have dazzled a Solomon, or the vices of a Jezebel have corrupted a court. Yet in all that time there never were wanting men who took up the splendid search where their ancestors had laid it down. Nearer and nearer the shining goal they came, till all the splendors of God burst forth on the eyes of the lonely watcher on the mountains of Galilee.

This is not a contradiction, it is a confirmation of the law of the universe. Fasten your attention firmly on your hand, say the physiologists, and the

blood will begin to flow toward that hand. The gymnast knows that he can, by turning his attention, develop to any extent the strength of any part of his body. The scholar knows this of the mind. The experiment of Judea proves this on a grand scale of the soul. If, then, prayer is a persistent intending of the whole mind toward gaining strength for the living out of the perfect life, the laws of the universe are not altered, but confirmed, if the result is success.

Here some one will say, "I grant that prayer, thus defined, has a good effect on man; but I cannot see how it can have any possible effect on God."

Friend, do you not see you have answered your own question by your admission? Strength, you admit, has come in upon the man through his prayer. Where has that strength come from? From God, has it not? Well, then, the result of the man's prayer on God was that a portion of God's spirit flowed into the man; that is, the prayer of the man produced motion in God, caused his spirit to move into the man. It is no alteration in the laws of the atmosphere that, when I open my mouth and draw in my breath, that act of mine produces motion in the air outside. It is part of the law of the air. And so it is no alteration in the law of the life of God that, when I long after his commandments, that longing produces motion in his spirit. It is part and parcel of the eternal, changeless law of his spirit's action. The unchangeableness of God, then, does not consist in his being forever *unmoved* by prayer, but in his being forever *moved* by prayer. The first would be the unchangeableness of indifference. The second is



the unchangeableness of love. The unchangeableness of a mother's love is shown not by her indifference, but by her constant, ever-watchful listening, night and day, to the cry of her children. So God's unchangeableness does not mean immovableness. It means everlasting motion,—motions toward the objects of his love.

Imagine a lot of sensible people actually arguing that a baby's cry cannot possibly move a mother's heart, that a baby's smile cannot possibly gladden it, simply because a mother's love is unchangeable. That is the very reason why the cry of pain and the smile of joy meet instant response from the mother heart.

To the question, then, "Does prayer in any way change the relation of God toward the soul?" we answer, Yes, just as opening the window of a hot, close room changes the relation of the outward air with regard to the room. It simply gives it the opportunity of free entrance. Before it did what it could. It tried to enter under the door and through the chinks of the windows. It prevented by even these inadequate means the people inside from being absolutely stifled. But, when the window was opened, then it had an abundant entrance, and could expand the laboring lungs, electrify the feverish blood, and brace up the whole system. Now was the law of atmospheric motion altered one jot by the opening of the window? Oh, no. Its law is to strive to equalize all temperatures to its own, to fill up all spaces with itself. It obeyed that law perfectly when it rushed through chink and cranny with

all the force it could, though the space it found was insufficient for a perfectly successful action. It obeyed that law equally when it joyously entered the open window, and brought life and strength to the jaded frames inside. Just so prayer opens the windows of the soul, so that God can enter in larger measure. His spirit is round the prayerless soul, seeking an entrance, entering by every little crevice that can be found. But this is not enough to fill up the soul's need of God. It is just enough to keep it from utter death, not enough to give it a free and joyous life. But prayer flings up the windows, and opens every door, and so God enters in all the fulness of blessing.

Does, then, prayer alter the laws of the action of God on the soul? Not at all. The law of that action is to strive to raise the temperature, so to speak, of all souls to his own warmth, to fill up all spiritual spaces with himself. That law was kept perfectly when the spirit was round the soul, entering through the smallest aperture in the walls of worldliness and sin, though the entrance was so inadequate to the soul's wants. That law was kept with equal perfection when the spirit entered right royally through the open gates of prayer, flung aside by the expectant soul, that the King of Glory might come in. But enough of theoretical difficulties. The time, I believe, is fast coming when we shall no longer suffer ourselves to be kept out of the search after God by words and names, or by our prejudice for or against this, that, or the other term by which the divine longing has been named by our fathers. Call it what you please,—

prayer, meditation, self-examination, or simply facing the facts,—the thing itself, the communion with the Eternal, the Ever-present Reality, we all must have.

If you tell me, "I do not feel the need of prayer," I know at once that you belong to one of two classes,—the first, a very small one; the second, a very large one. Either you are one of those whose will is so completely, naturally, and simply at one with the divine will that you breathe in God without conscious effort and breathe him out in instinctive tenderness, peace, and good will to all mankind, and so, unconsciously to yourself, your whole life is a prayer, every limb and faculty you have taking in and giving forth the very blessing and presence of the Highest the whole of the livelong day, or else you are one of that large class who are entirely unconscious of their spiritual need.

If, however, we can show the deep need of the first class for prayer, we have proved our case for all mankind. What do I say, then, to such lovers of the good? I warn such

" 'Tis the most difficult of tasks to keep  
Heights that the soul is competent to gain."

We have this treasure in earthen vessels. It is very hard to keep persistently a high aim in every thing. It is very hard to get high first. The eagle's strong pinions are tasked to climb the heavens. Ay; and, when up yonder he seems motionless, his wings must be moved from time to time, in order to keep the height his mighty effort has gained.

"To what shall I compare the soul?" says Socrates.

“To a charioteer with two winged steeds. Now, the souls of all lovers of the true follow the chariots of the blessed Gods round the circle of the heavens, and there behold the Absolute Truth, Justice, and Purity, and are fed thereon. Now both of the horses of the Gods are pure and of heavenly birth. But the chariots of our souls are drawn by one good and noble horse and one bad one, and it is the most terrible of tasks to whip the bad horse up to his work; and there is constant danger lest, through the smallest neglect of the driver, the dull, heavy horse should drag his noble comrade, chariot, soul, and all, below heaven, down, down, down, in a spiral curve, till it reaches the dull, common, sordid earth.” What is this but saying in other words, The flesh lusteth against the spirit?

I warn you, then, you who love the beautiful life, you who intend to live it, to be on God's side and on man's, that you may live days, months, ay, years, on a lower than your true level for lack of a few such grand hours as this divine communion would have given. When somehow, no matter from what cause, the lower standpoint of living has been silently taken in any one of the many departments of your life, in your domestic, social, business, political relations, it matters not which, when you have, perchance all unconsciously, suffered the house of your soul to be invaded and broken into through any one of its thousand gates, I warn you, I warn myself, I warn all lovers of the good and true that slowly, yet with fatal sureness, the audacious invader will begin to take possession of all other departments, marring, if

not destroying altogether, the beauty and glory of all. You can establish coarse, vulgar relations between yourself and your wife, your husband, child, brother, sister, friends, business connections, political party, between yourself and any one of these, and keep fine, sweet, beautiful relations with all the rest, can you? Yes, as easily as you can prevent water from finding its own level. You can lower your tone, your style of performance in one department of duty, and keep it high, chivalrous, perfect in all the rest, can you? Yes, as easily as a general can hold his position when he has let the enemy get into his rear through one weak place in his lines.

Some time ago I had a singular dream, which I will try to describe exactly as it occurred. I dreamed that I was in possession of a most extraordinary treasure, which I kept down in my cellar in a strong iron box. One morning I saw some men come along with a quantity of heavy tools, hammers, cold chisels, and what not. They quietly walked down the steps of my cellar, which was open; and I upstairs heard them working away. When it was about lunch, I thought they had been working very hard for a long time; so I sent them down something to eat. At last the noise ceased; and, as all was quiet, I thought I would go down and have a talk with them, and be a little neighborly. But they had vanished, tools and all; and, to my horror and amazement, I found that my iron-bound box was broken open, and that every vestige of my dearly loved treasure had disappeared.

"It was nothing but a nightmare," you will say. "No sane person in his waking hours would allow

a lot of burglars to walk down his open cellar in broad day, hear them working hour by hour, and even send them down a lunch, and into the very place where his most valued treasures are deposited."

Yet it all seemed perfectly natural to me at the time. Only when my treasure was gone did I, in my dream, rail at my own unheard of folly and thick-headedness. And I fear, friends, that you and I have been many and many a time just as inconceivably stupid in the affairs of the soul. Our heart's treasure is there all safe, deposited in the most secret places of our spirit; and yet in open day how often have we seen, as plainly as possible, the burglars go down with their tools of hate, suspicion, obstinacy, pride, uncharitableness, low desire, or sleepy indolence! Ay, and we have heard them at work, and actually fed them with their own coarse food. Ay, and we have not had the most distant idea that they were after our sacred treasure of love and hope and helpfulness and high endeavor till we wake up suddenly to find them gone.

There is no safety for us, friends and lovers of the Perfect Life, no sure providing against even ignominious defeat, save the summoning up from time to time in the presence of the helpful, pitying, tender Father of us all, every thought, action, desire, purpose, passion, faculty, duty, temptation, and putting them all into captivity to the law of Christ.

Complete conversion, or entire turning toward God, is the grandest act that man can perform, and has to be performed not once, but many, many times in a lifetime. It is a central moment in a man's life

when he summons up every thought and motive and desire to the bar of judgment, and says, "I will in the presence and with the help of God *this day, now*, put everything that is in me into captivity to the law of Christ. No high thing that exalts itself against that but shall be put down. No cherished selfishness but shall be crushed. I will look searchingly into all the details of my domestic life, and set up the beautiful law as the law of the home. It shall look out of my eyes into the eyes of my children. They shall learn from me to reverence it infinitely, and set it up as the law they rejoice to obey. It shall be written up over the door of my house, so that any friend coming in shall understand that this house is dedicated to the blessed Father of all, is indeed a temple to his praise. I will set it up as the rule of my intercourse with my fellow-men, every one of them. I will deal with them all as with my dearly beloved brothers, common children of the common Father. It shall be inscribed over the door of my workshop. I will stamp it on everything I sell, on everything I undertake. Men shall learn to trust me, even as they trust truth and rectitude itself. It shall mount guard over my most secret thought. No mean, low, vulgar, or gross desire shall enter. I invite the Spirit of all good to take possession of my whole spirit and soul and body, to use every limb of the body and every faculty of the mind for the service of the beautiful cause of truth and right and good in the world."

The time is far off still when the last word about prayer can be said; but this we can already see, that the hope and faith of our fathers and mothers are com-

ing back to us, enlarged and purified, but as strong and as simple as ever. The simple wonder at the daily bounty, the simple prayer for daily guidance, the simple trust in Him who doeth all things well, the simple going to the strong for strength, the simple commending to his kind care and keeping "all for whom we are bound to pray,"—all this is coming back to us enlarged and ennobled. There will be a change, I will say a noble change, in its methods. There will be a larger faith, a more manly daring, a complete absence of all adulation, a far greater simplicity and directness, a more sturdy inclusion of things so called common, a resolute omission of all cant phrases, of all unreasonable petitions. We shall no longer remind God of things he may possibly have forgotten: but the sphere of prayer will be widened, not narrowed. Our prayers for ourselves will be larger and nobler. Our prayers for others will not be less, but more worthy of God and them. All our modern difficulties and puzzles will be solved when we understand that there is only one life, and that God and his children live that life together, and that infinite and finite life act and react on each other in endless succession.

The instant response across the starry spaces of world to world, so that each and every star feels at once the movement and the exact direction of movement of every other star, types exactly the inconceivable sensitiveness of life to the movements of life. No matter what distance separates souls that love and sympathize with each other; for, to Love, the universe is one huge telephone, which repeats the message of heart to heart across the vast of heaven



The response of world to world and soul to soul alike illustrates the omnipotence and omnipresence of the Divine Spirit, is impossible and unthinkable without that Spirit, but is the natural and inevitable result of the presence of that Spirit. The universe is one, because one infinitely sensitive life fills it.

All providences, special and general, are seen to be not only possible, but inevitable, when we know that everywhere life carries out the behests of life, that God lives and loves everywhere, and that everywhere his universe is peopled with finite intelligences that live out and love out his will. When a mother prays for her wayward child, the omnipotence and omnipresence of God are ready and waiting to carry the power of her prayer to the beloved soul. The Divine Presence around her feels the thrill of her love and desire, and passes that, pulse by pulse, its force all unbroken and unimpaired by distance, straight to the wayward boy, to reappear in his consciousness as at least some faint desire for repentance and a better life. If one atom of that force could be lost, then God could be lost.

But here comes a much-needed word of warning. Remember the definition, "To labor is to pray." The prayer of words is often worse than useless. It actually drugs the conscience with a vain sense of something done, when nothing is done, if instant work is the thing imperatively indicated. To pray to God to save a child in danger of being run over is vain folly and wickedness, if it be your plain duty to risk your life in trying to save it from the horses' feet. If you need strength to do it, pray to God instantly for that;

and the swift Giver will have already nerved both heart and hand.

The Irish servant-girl thinks she can pray her parents out of Purgatory; and so she can, if she prays aright. Get rid, friend, of every evil taint that father and mother put into your blood. Do this for their sakes. Agonize for this, if agonize you must. What self-respecting parent would dare to ask for the peace of Heaven while ill-seed of his sowing was ripening to fearful harvest in the breasts of his children? No prayer for the repose of a parent's soul mounts upward so fast as the aspiration toward purity, toward heaven, in the breasts of his children. This central caution must never be forgotten, must always be emphasized; but, this granted, I know no limits, in its own sphere, to the power of prayer, not only for ourselves, but for others. Heartily to wish blessing and strength to any life blesses and strengthens that life. God passes the blessing on, and gives it increase. Mankind have hindered each other long enough by evil wishes. It is time that the era of good will to men should begin. To those who believe in this and hope for this I dedicate, as to friends in the spirit, the lines that follow:—

#### SHELTERED.

Beneath the shelter that your prayers have reared,  
 Quiet and blest,  
 The storm that struck me down no longer feared,  
 Secure I rest.

How strange a shelter, like a tent of glass  
    Around my bed!  
Through it I see the broken storm-clouds pass  
    Above my head.

Strong-roofed it is, and yet the starlight fair  
    Loses no ray.  
Storm-proof it is, and yet the gentlest air  
    Through it can stray.

Curious, I rise to touch it with my hands;  
    But they pass through.  
No finest, airiest film between me stands  
    And God's own blue.

Whom shall I bless? I bless the Lord of all,  
    Whose all things are.  
His robe it is whose folds around me fall  
    All ill to bar.

Yet must I bless, in Him, the friendly hands  
    Whose fingers wove  
Out of that robe this angel tent, that stands  
    Strong with his love.





# THE WEEKLY EXCHANGE

A SERIES OF SERMONS

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP

JOSEPH MAY

THOMAS R. SLICER

THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

---

CERTAIN OF OUR OWN POETS

BY

JOSEPH MAY

Pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia

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SERIES II

NOVEMBER 13, 1892

No. 2

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C.

BOSTON

GEO. H. ELLIS, PUBLISHER, 141 FRANKLIN STREET

NEW YORK, 104 EAST 20TH STREET

1892

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## CERTAIN OF OUR OWN POETS.

---

“Certain also of your own poets.”—ACTS xvii. 28.

AMONG the arts one is confessed by all to be pre-eminent, the loftiest and deepest, queen of all the rest. I need not name it. Painting, sculpture, architecture, music — next to the highest — but above all, poetry.

Poetry is, perhaps, the earliest, also. It is the spontaneous fruit of the imagination beginning to work in men. To see things ideally, to express them as one who calls them into being—this is the method and impulse of the imagination. Men are children of the Divine; and, as creation is His universal function, we inherit the power and the instinct. To create is the deepest of experiences and most ecstatic of delights. As soon as the mind rose at all above a merely objective condition; as soon, that is, as it became self-conscious, analytical of its own workings, its emotions, sensibilities, longings; contemplative of the world outside self; so soon the arts began to be born, and, as I have said, first and most naturally, poetry—the attempt to give expression to the secret stirrings of thought and feeling, the heart’s idealistic conceptions, of which attempt language was the congenial, the most ready and most effective instrument.



The definition of poetry may not be easy; but certainly structure—rhythm, rhyme, cadence—are not its most essential elements, but this creative mode of mental action, as distinguished from the logical and analytical, which is that of the philosopher and the moralist. The poet seems to be distinguished from his brother, the maker of fiction, and to rise above him through his idealism. The dramatist unites the two, and so expresses himself in either mode, poetry or prose. The poet is even more than the seer; for, while his mind acts intuitively, he not only entertains visions, but re-creates them, and sets them forth—as Shakspeare expresses it, “turns them to shapes.” This his name implies, the word “poet” meaning, of course, “creator.”

And in this creative method is the fundamental power of poetry, which makes it perennially attractive and influential. Logic may be disputed. New modes of reasoning may deprive it of power. Poetry merely reproduces truths and the facts of life in idealized forms, and leaves them to make congenial impressions. All the force of truth is there, to work as it finds material to work on. What truth can do, what reality can do, shall thus be done as hearts grow tender to receive it. Sooner or later the world will answer to the true poet, for truth is its necessary sustenance. It will crave and accept it at last.

Poetry (like all other arts, but poetry most) has thus been to men the great revealer. What the facts of life were for grosser minds too obscure to render up, the fine perception of the poet, penetrating and interpreting, has understood, and his magic power has

reproduced in disencumbered forms, through which the truth is luminous. Love, valor, patriotism, ambition, piety, aspiration — every fine and every great emotion — the poet has analyzed and inspired in his fellows.

And we may well remark this here; for, peculiarly, poetry has thus been the ally of religion. On the fundamental truths in every department, the mind of necessity acts *intuitively*. God, the soul, duty,— these finalities have to be discerned; they cannot be demonstrated. All ultimate facts have to be seen or assumed. The seer, the prophet, the poet, must discover them, and set them forth as beautiful realities for brother-minds to recognize and love.

All profound religious faith is therefore in quality intuitive, not logical. Its verities must be *seen* by the race-leaders, and then spoken. His is a signal service to men who, by eloquent phrase, makes them vivid and gracious in men's eyes. Especially have the poets done this. No utterance of the prophet — *i.e.*, preacher — of divine truth can so steal into men's hearts and twine among their fibres as the tender, inspiring strains of poetry. To-day the Psalms, with all their limitations, are still the best known and best loved portion of the Bible, the words of Jesus (himself so much a poet in the essence of it) scarcely excepted.

The power of poetry is largely that it addresses itself to the most impressible functions of the mind, the imagination and the feelings. Logic approaches the reason, which justly *resists* each new conviction, until by force it compels admission. The moralist

appeals to the conscience, which may be torpid, and which relucts ever at new exertions: The imagination and feelings wear no armor; they are receptive, plastic, responsive.

Poetry is the congenial vehicle of sentiment, which craves to pour itself out, but cannot do so in logical or philosophical forms, but only to sympathetic hearts, with which poetry is the natural bond. Union of sentiment comes simply from seeing the same truth, which it will be the art of poetry to make common and real to both. Sympathy being the condition of poetic utterance and its response, emotions no man would dare trust to the chill forms of prose breathe naturally and touchingly through the suggestive, half-uttered phrase of verse, which seems to defend their sanctity from all unfeeling approaches.

Thus, again, it is plain how apt is the service poetry has been able to render to religion. The religious life has, in hymns and sacred poems, expressed, fortified, and reinvigorated itself as in nothing else.

On the manward side, also, poetry is religion's potent helper. Poetry unveils the man within. In its forms the heart willingly lays itself bare with all its emotions of hope, faith, aspiration, love, penitence, despair. So it teaches us of our brothers. It betrays their answering throbs of pain or joy. It *unifies* our race. The bare *statement* of what men thought in some distant time, or now think and feel in some distant land, may interest; but give us only some fragment of an ancient hymn, some foreign poem of love or longing, and instantly we are at one with the long-gone generation, or far-off people.

Again, poetry has been and is the nurse of emotion, of lofty thinking. It shadows forth invitingly and suggestively conceptions too vague as yet for formal expression. It is permitted to be enthusiastic. It may rise even to frenzy. Its relations to its hearer being confidential, no thought is so fine, no feeling so sacred and tender, that it may not be uttered in the forms of the poet.

Correlatively, it is these forms which deep emotion instinctively seeks. Highest thought, deepest feeling, always inspire poetic expression. It is the natural product of emotion. Prosaic minds have overflowed with poetry when love or grief, patriotism or religion, has profoundly stirred them.

Probably poetry was originally the child of emotion. I presume it was spontaneously born of feeling. It was thus that it became the earliest form of literature. The passion of triumph, coarse but fiercely inspiring, welled through men's hearts, awakening the imagination and urging them into rudimentary poetic strains, to celebrate their victories and the prowess of their chieftains. The first poets were the bards, like Lamech and Miriam and Deborah, or those who sang at the feasts of our rude Saxon ancestors, and produced the Sagas and Eddas of the North and the Homeric epics of the South.

The gods were but greater heroes to those rude men. I imagine that the exploits of their deities came next, and that out of fierce songs of praise (of which we have relics still in the Hebrew hymns) religious psalmody arose.

Then came lyrists, like the Minnesingers, trouba-

dours, and balladists, who caught inspiration not from war only, but from the peaceful and domestic life of men, and especially from the mastering passion of love and its thousand tragedies.

Thus poetry has been the embalming agent of all the deep experiences of the human heart, from age to age; preserving them, and itself growing sweeter, defter, more searching, and more inspiring always, until long since it has become the profoundest mode of utterance for the aspirations, longings, joys, griefs, faiths, and passions of mankind. Though its vehicle is immaterial, its products are the most enduring of all the fruits of the arts. Phidias and Praxiteles are little more than names now; but the Homeric poems are familiar to thousands, and fresher to-day than ever.

“Homer is gone; and where is Jove?  
The rival cities seven?  
His song outlasts town, tower, and god,  
All that then was — save heaven.”\*

Solomon’s temple crumbled centuries ago; but the nineteenth and twenty-third Psalms are immortally new, and touch our hearts to-day only the more deeply because, it may be, fourscore generations of suffering and trusting men have poured their hearts out through those silver words.

Because poetry is the child of emotion, great poetry is always the fruit of heroic periods — of those periods, at least (of which there have been some in every nation’s history), when human life has taken on depth and freshness and vigor. The origin of the

\*I do not know the source of this fragment.

Homeric poems is obscure, but they speak for themselves as generated by the fresh impressions of valor and its achievements in an age still intellectually young and full of life. Dante and Petrarch and the school of Italian poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were the congenial product of that marvellous experience of the Renaissance, when, after a long, fallow sleep, new life poured through the mind of Europe, and filled its veins to bursting with virility and facility. The Elizabethan period gave England her greatest poets. It was even true of these Psalms in which Hebrew poesy flowered that they blossomed largely in the period of the people's intensest life, when as a nation they were overwhelmed with defeat, but when all the springs of vitality in them had been by adversity deepened and quickened as never before or after.

It has been even somewhat so among ourselves. We have not been and are not a poetic people. The stern quality of the task which was laid upon our predecessors, and their dire creeds, checked passion and imagination at their sources. Yet at length we had a school of poets; and it is at least remarkable that, while they do not all very distinctly reflect it, they all came up and did their work in and near the period of our intensest national experiences.

Our thoughts naturally turn just now with some wistfulness to this remarkable group of men, not only because their work is over and all but one are gone, but because they have, and are likely to have, no successors. Our present day is, if not sordid, yet not deeply kindled by any great moral question such

as stirs men's hearts, divides households, and sets mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law. We are busy, prosperous; perhaps we are materialistic. Ours is not a creative age, which should produce creators, poets, but an organizing, administrative one. Alas, it is not an idealistic time. We call it "practical." Our hero to day is the millionaire.

The chief poets of America have been six in number. Not one perhaps has been of the very first order. Shakspeare or Dante comes but once in a millennium. But more than one of our poets has been great, and is to live very long in literature. Several of them will always rank with the best singers of any people, after those heaven-sent geniuses to whom no successor is second. Their endowments have been contrasted, attesting their individuality and originality. All but one were of the liberally educated class. Four at least had the best intellectual culture our country could bestow. One was a man of the people, of the hard-working farming class in New England; but that often implies the purest and best blood and most faithful home-training any of our citizens inherit and enjoy.

We may call Whittier the Burns of New England; but the peasant, with his sordid limitations, mental and social, has had no place in that dignified, well-descended, democratic population. It is permissible to ourselves and interesting — it ought to be suggestive — to remark that five of the six were Unitarians by actual religious associations; but no true poet could be a sectary, and neither of these was such. The sixth was a Friend. Bryant, Emerson,

Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Whittier,— is it not suggestive that neither of these men suffered the repressing and distorting influences of the hateful Calvinistic creed? that all of them, seers as they were, full of the finest religious sensibility, abhorred, repudiated, and bore witness against it? As has been lately said, and as I have intimated, the true poet *must be* liberal in spirit; for genius must be free,— free to see all truth as it shall be revealed to it by God in nature and in life, free to proclaim it, to breathe it forth in the phrase which is born in one's own heart.

Yet fine and deep poetic powers have been chained to the car of creeds, and we may rejoice that America's great poets escaped the cramping effects of such bondage. We may rejoice still more that these poets were men and writers of not only stainless purity of life and thought, but of a moral quality elevated even according to the most idealistic standard. Nor are they noble moralists only, sweet teachers of all that is pure and gracious in the daily lives of men and women. They have all been distinctly *religious* men, who have illuminated religious faith, confirmed it, and made its objects and conceptions lovely and trustworthy. All but one are represented in our own hymn-book; and he (perhaps the greatest on the whole) might well be. Every one of these men has contributed to idealize human life, to show the beauty of its pure relations, the security of its moral conditions, its foundation in eternity, its infinite hope. They have surrounded home, marriage, parenthood, childship, with the fairest halo. They have dignified



citizenship, and have taught the lesson of God's inalterable sovereignty in the public as in the private concerns of men. Humor has been with them free from stain of coarseness, and has even served the highest interests of the nation, as well as harmlessly amused our people or instructively illustrated popular characteristics.

What singular good fortune, let us stop to remark, that men, holding in their hearts and brains the pervasive, subtile power of poesy, were such as these! Our mother country is just now celebrating the centenary of Shelley. Compare the value in moral influence of the poems of Shelley with those of Longfellow or Whittier! How often the poetic temperament has been associated with passion, divorced from moral perception and feeling! No doubt the poet is especially born of his generation, and reflects its conditions; and it is to the high ethical quality of the New England character we owe it that her poets have been as pure, fine, gracious, as they are. Yet there might have arisen even in that community a man of genius unbalanced by moral goodness, who, instead of the inspirations of Lowell and Whittier, the balm and peace of Longfellow, the innocent mirth of Holmes, should have diffused through his works the moral contagion of a Byron or of that satyr among the poets whom some of our contemporaries at home and abroad have of late striven to drag into repute.

Yet it is fair to say that Byron and Shelley, like one or two who could be named of contemporary English poets, were, as men and as poets, abnormal and exceptional also in their country. It is profoundly to the

credit of the English stock, in which we all rejoice to inherit, that our literature, which, as I have hinted, reflects closely the moral quality of any period, has been singularly pure. What a roll of honor might be read off among her former poets! In our own time, besides her Tennyson and Browning, poets also of an immaculate page, England has matched our poets with a group of novelists of the first order. It may be said of them all, especially of the leaders of the group, that their works tell for virtue and humanity, distinctly and strongly. You give them to youth in mass and fearlessly. In perfect strictness of expression, I hesitate over one English novelist, and that one a woman; but at least it may be said of her that her prevailing—doubtless her only conscious—motive was elevated.

We cannot, I say, too much rejoice in such an inheritance. Though these poets and novelists should have no one to take up their pens, the body of modern English literature of the first grade remains an abundant, magnificent, and precious treasury of delight, instruction, and moral suggestion. I think no nation has possessed its equal on the whole.

Although I have been delivering a lecture rather than a sermon, this is not the occasion for detailed reference to the works of the New England poets. Their lives, save one, are ended; but, though dead, they shall sing on. Their writings are household words. The verdict of posterity can be of only one strain. In some of their finest productions, they have risen very near the highest level of poetical achievement. Some passages in Lowell are sublime. Wit-

ness "The Present Crisis" and "The Commemoration Ode." The latter was never equalled, I think, in its kind, though in that kind Milton, also, wrote, and Dryden. "The Vision of Sir Launfal" seems to me an almost unique thing, with the perfectness that belongs to the works of nature only. Certainly, in lyrical beauty, moral elevation, and religious suggestion, literature holds nothing more incomparable.

Nothing more exquisite in grace of thought and perfection of expression was ever penned than some of the poems of Longfellow. While hearts are human and literature lasts, these simple but most artistic pieces must survive as surely as the odes of Horace. They have in them the purity and they have the lastingness of gems. Lowell's poem to his wife, "My Love," surpasses, I think, in nobility and beauty, as in pure fervor, all that ever was written to or of a woman. Emerson's and Lowell's threnodies over their lost babes touch the very depths of pathos and the heights of faith and trust. Longfellow's "Resignation" has, I suppose, carried more peace to hearts wrung with sorrow than any words that have been sung or spoken outside the Bible since Rachel wept for her children. Almost as much might be said doubtless of his "Footsteps of Angels." And beside these are fitly placed several of Whittier's poems of sorrow; while his "Psalm" and "The Eternal Goodness" express, in forms which could not be more engaging, that pure, simple, but utter religious faith which is the final comfort in all forms of trial. Of all the literature of Christianity, scarcely anything can have been written to the praise of Jesus more lovely, more

reconciling, more appreciative, than his "Our Master."

It is the still recent death of Whittier, recalling to him an attention which had never wandered, and turning our thoughts to him as a benefactor receding in person from our view, but to live long in the hearts of posterity, which has prompted me to speak to-day of his art and of his contemporaries and their work.

Not the least of a distinguished group lingered in him till of them all but one longer survives, and he a veteran not likely again to strike his lyre. It has been suggestive and beautiful to be taught by the feeling lately shown how deeply one like Whittier had enshrined himself in the heart of our generation. He was especially the poet of the people in his profound sympathy with the working class from which he sprang; his knowledge of their life, its bareness, its pathos, its romance; his love of nature and the rural scenes amid which still the great body of the people move as they fulfil their daily round. He was above all others the poet of New England; and he will remain such, for the characteristic New England life is passing, and there will hardly be time for another to arise and sing it, although a woman's hand now limns it in prose pictures with a perfect art. But, while he was popular in his subjects and his treatment of them, while his diction partly reflected the circumstances of his birth and training in its racy idiom, and even in an occasional grammatical lapse, yet Whittier was never *common*. No verses were ever more dignified and elevated than all of his. He was *high-born* in taste as in morality. He touched

the homely things of rural life, the simple popular legends in which he delighted, always to gild them, to reveal the intrinsic nobleness and beauty which lurk wherever there are truth, simplicity, purity, and faith.

He has aptly been called the poet of religious trust. Trust is the spirit of those poems of his which I have named and of "My Triumph," "Gone," "Lines to a Friend on the Death of a Sister," and others innumerable. Religious feeling indeed permeates all he wrote, and gives it an indescribable grace and charm. It colors his phrase, and points and emphasizes his utterances on whatever particular theme.

But the religion of Whittier was eminently ethical. Righteousness was the other key-note, sounding full and in perfect harmony with his piety. He might well be called, also, the poet of humanity, so keen was his sense of human brotherhood and of the essential dignity of human nature, and so quick and warm were his sympathy with all the wants and sorrows and all the glad things of men. It would be vain to name the poems which illustrate this. He could not write without conveying the sense of it.

This strong ethical and humanitarian sense probably impaired his quality as an artist. His poems lack here and there the perfect literary finish of Longfellow's. He wrote with too much purpose to have consented often to delay the utterance of what was to him a veritable message to his fellows.

The same causes in his nature — his religious sense, his ethical fervor, his warm humanitarian sympathies — made Whittier pre-eminently the poet of

the anti-slavery reform and of the days of the great war. Lowell was his compeer and comrade in the great struggle; but, though his was sometimes the sublimer note, Whittier's clarion was still more steadily blown. Into the Abolition movement, headed by Garrison, his earliest friend as a poet, Whittier threw himself with all his soul; and his rhymes came fast and hot from his heart, to give vent to the fervor which his tongue could not express. "He was our laureate," said one of the steadfast members of the little prophetic band. Though he could not speak, he could stand by those who did; and he braved the dangers of their service and shared its privations with unshrinking, unwearied heart.

In war-time he was consistent with the principles of the Friends; but as a great struggle out of which he trusted Providence to bring our country emancipated from the curse of slavery, his heart was in it, and he poured forth again a series of lyrics so full of moral fire that some of them have almost the force of war-songs. It is impossible to estimate how much the growing sense of the iniquity of slaveholding and the resolution to cast it off owe to this Tyrtæus of the cause of freedom.

The last of our great poets is gone. We cannot hope to see others rise to take their places. God renews his gifts, but not in kind. Happily, the poets do not die. The proud boast of Horace fell far short of what has been realized for him. Centuries ago the sacred virgin and the pontifex ceased to climb the capitol, and his very language is a dead one; but the

poet's songs are as fresh as ever. Truly, it seems that perfect poetry is immortal.

So this group of contemporaries and friends, singers of our day and country, shall still sing on. Our descendants shall drink of their fountain of delight and inspiration, and shall know and love them as we have done.

And yet it is sad to let go the actual presence of those who have been, not only poets so inspiring, but as men so dear!







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A COMFORTING WORD

BY

THOMAS R. SLICER

Minister of the Church of our Father, Buffalo, N.Y.

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SERIES II

NOVEMBER 20, 1892

No. 3

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C.

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## A COMFORTING WORD.

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“She hath done what she could.”—MARK xiv. 8.

THIS kindly comment upon a beautiful but simple act was spoken by the Master to his disciples not long before his death. I mention the time, because it is a significant feature of the character of Jesus that he was never so taken up with the contemplation of his own sufferings as to be taken away from the claims of others who were suffering; nor was he ever made oblivious of the lives of humble folk about him. He was no mystic, rapt away from common life; yet he was the Prince of Mystics in this,—that, when most alive unto God, he was filled with a compassion that was divine in its tenderness and strength. Transfigured on the Mount, he comes down out of that radiant experience to heal the demoniac boy at the foot of the Mount. On his way to Jerusalem, with the sound of angry voices already present to his imagination, crying, “Crucify him!” he is stopped by the cry of a blind beggar by the wayside; providing also for the care of his mother and the beloved disciple in the agony of crucifixion; turning from them to emphasize the prayer of a dying thief, and comforting him with a voice tremulous with love and pain. Thus do the memories of those who wrote about him preserve the sweet assurance that he turned not away from his great design, but that he turned in it to assert the divine communion that love has with sorrow.

In the incident with which the text stands related we are told that Jesus and his disciples were dining at Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, one of those upon whom the healing touch of Jesus had rested. As the company reclined at the table, there entered Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus of Bethany. We are told, with a phrase of characterization, that Lazarus was at the table, that Martha was serving, when this other sister, given to quiet meditation rather than to life's activities, entered the room. She had in her hand an alabaster cruse of perfume, pure spikenard, very costly. As Jesus reclined on the couch, with his head upon one hand and his feet stretched out beyond the cushions, Mary broke the seal of the alabaster cruse, and poured a part of the perfume on his head and a part on his feet, wiping his feet with her hair, as in another account we are told that a sinful woman had wiped away the tears which had fallen on the Master's feet from eyes too used to weeping. The house was filled with the odor of the ointment, ascending like the incense which John saw in his vision, and likens to the prayers of the saints. It was a beautiful and affectionate act which this simple woman was doing; but it did not seem so to all those who were at the table. They thought it a waste to pour the perfume out in this lavish way, even upon the head of their Teacher. They knew what a humble life he had led, how little he cared for soft and delicate living; and to those who were looking on it seemed an act not well considered. But it was Judas, the treasurer of the little group, and the traitor, who spoke out, and said: "Wherefore is this waste? This ointment might have been sold for three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." This murmuring embarrassed the simple and

affectionate woman, and it was not pleasing to Jesus. He did not care for the honor which was implied by "the oil of gladness" poured upon his head as a great Rabbi. But he did care for the sentiment which had prompted it. Such love was not to be estimated lightly: it was love which had given its best and saved its costliest, and counted nothing too good for one who had opened a new life to Mary as she sat at his feet, choosing "that good part which shall not be taken from her." To entertain him there under the shadow of his coming doom, to do him honor when a price was upon his head, to anoint him like a king when they feared he was to die like a criminal,—all this meant more, as measured by that standard which gives us an estimate of the regenerating forces in the world, than any division of the money among the poor. It was Mary's cruse of perfume, to do with as she pleased. If she sold it, some one would buy it, to sell again or use; and that which avarice might sell or vanity might use had fallen into the hands of love. So Jesus turns to her where she stands, embarrassed and rebuked, and gently comforts her, saying: "She hath done what she could. She hath wrought a beautiful work on me," which is the Greek way of saying what we mean when we say that one "has done a kind thing in a beautiful way."

So there falls upon the discontent of these grumblers the entreaty, "Let her alone,"—do not vex her; do not spoil the pleasure she is taking in a simple loving act; let not the grace of the sentiment disappear in an effort to estimate it in money value, to ticket it and label it and show its price; love knows no calculation; when it begins to bargain, it ceases to be love.

A great sorrow was coming to all that loved Jesus.

He thinks of this now, and says, "She is embalming my body for the burial. It is a very gracious and pleasant thing to be led by hands of love thus to the very entrance of my hour of agony. I understand it, because I have loved you all 'to the uttermost'; and love is love's interpreter."

Thus he utters his kindly judgment, and reassures the timid soul. The simple act is lifted to the highest plain; a lesson is taught concerning that upper range of our nature, the history of which is registered in the affections; and this kindly judgment sets forth the ground of encouragement for all time and for all men with the words, "She hath done what she could." In a time of danger she had identified herself with the persecuted and the unpopular. If any danger threatened him, it could not well pass by her. Already schemes had been laid to betray her brother Lazarus. What can a weak woman do at such a time but commit herself to the same cause and share the same condemnation, harbor, entertain, and honor the great Teacher, who is the centre of so much wrath and in such imminent danger? She could love and she could suffer; and she did what she could.

Let us make a simple application to ourselves of this standard of judgment, and out of this remote past of gentle sentiments and graceful affections gather for ourselves at once for this more complex and ambitious time the comfort and the incentive which it suggests. Said Jesus, "She hath done what she could."

Now observe that *the worth of an action lies not in the estimate of how much we can do, but in the relation of what is done to what can be done.* It is not necessary that a man shall achieve a great work, but it is necessary

that the thing which he does shall be in just proportion to his working power. This seems a trite statement. It is so, but it must be reiterated because it is so constantly lost sight of in practical life. More truths of this self-evident kind are lost through neglect than are worn out by use. So we must remember and constantly assert that the moving forces in the world are moral forces: all others are the implements held in the hand of the moral forces. When I say moral forces, I use the word in that large sense which includes all right intelligence, as distinguished from mere mechanical forces, whether by mechanical we mean the mechanism of thought or of muscle. The most intricate and most delicate machinery cannot explain its own motive-power nor create its own motion. Therefore, we say, in a general and yet exact sense, the moving forces of the world are the moral forces, and all others are implements in the hands of these moral forces; and this is equivalent to saying that the work of life is to be judged by moral values, not by standards either mechanical or numerical. And this is the reason why it is better a man should expend all his powers in his work than that he should have great powers to expend. Nothing is so deadening to right living as a balance of unused faculty. It seems to infect with its decay the whole man, so that what he once did well, being only a part of what he might have done, comes at last to be difficult to do, from the dead weight of indifference and lethargy laid upon him by the gifts he has failed to use. The duller men about him distance him in the race simply by their commonplace fidelity to their own smaller powers, as a thrifty farmer will live in independence beside a great estate, which is simply rolling up indebtedness for its



idle owners. The alert and eager soul "has done what he could": the other may have done as much, but he has certainly not done as well; for the measure of his performance lies far beyond anything that has been achieved, and so he must be reckoned an example of waste and loss rather than an instance of power and efficiency.

The lists of public service are full of such men, disappointing and disappointed. Literature is impoverished in the case of many such men,—impoverished more by what they have failed to do than it has been enriched by what they have done. Common life is full of discontented men and women, who have accomplished little for no other reason than this: they have not "done what they could." They remind one of well-equipped manufactories in which half the fine machinery is rusting from idleness.

This distinction must receive emphasis therefore: it is not the work done in the world which has first consideration, but fulfilling our destiny as workers in the world. It is a fine declaration of Carlyle: "Work out that thing which God hath wrought in thee." There is no obligation laid upon you to do a great work, but to do the greatest that you can. No large place is necessarily to be filled. Nature takes care of reserve power and unused balances in her resources. We need not be niggardly in using her gifts or afraid of expending ourselves. The increase of strength comes with its use: we need not spare ourselves. The standard of judgment will not be found in our relative importance and efficiency, but in our actual expenditure and outlay of the resources at our command. Thus it comes to pass that great results of moral value attach to brief and

humble lives. God needs no man's work. We cannot by any process, the most ambitious, put Heaven in our debt. If our work were to stop to-morrow, the work of the world would feel scarcely a faint jar in its regular procession. The life of the community would go on, the place we had left vacant would soon heal over and scarcely leave a scar. We can be spared by all save those who love us. This is not so much source of discouragement as ground of confidence in the ordering of common life. It leaves one matter very clear,—our work, our feverish activity, is not necessary to the world: there is that in us of greater worth,—character, our very selves. What is demanded is not our work, but us, in all our powers. We are to hold back no part of the price when we bestow ourselves on the life of our time. What we do is tributary to what we are to become, and it is proof of what we are. It is in this view high praise which is bestowed upon the woman when Jesus says, "She hath done what she could."

But, in view of this test, there are certain duties which we owe ourselves.

We must see to it that we have due regard to our tone,—the wholesomeness and soundness of our own natures. It is too much said that we must not think about ourselves, but live a free natural life. This is the inevitable reaction from that older habit of too strict scrutiny of ourselves, that morbid self-examination which led to an ill-adjustment to the naturalness of religion. We are told that we must lead our lives the best we can. But how are we to know what is the best that we can, without some self-knowledge? There must be self-examination, not morbid, but sincere; not with eyes turned upon ourselves alone, but turned also

upon the high standards of ideal character. As it is the business of a man to see to it that he is in good health, to have a due care of how he lives, that he may lead a strong and natural life, so he must have a care of the temper and tone of his nature; for his usefulness will more depend upon the tone of his mind than on anything that his mind is likely to produce besides. It is the quality of his actions that will characterize them more than their historical setting. But the reply is made, Is not this tone and quality a thing that comes with birth? Can it be cultivated? It comes with birth indeed, but largely because in other generations it was matter of solicitude: we inherit the careful training of the past. The instrument in the musician's hand may be of material selected with greatest care by the maker, but it is for the player to see that it is well strung. Some men front the world from birth with exceptional endowments; but this only adds to responsibility. For them there is the additional danger of great gifts unused. We do not need to go far to find examples of nature, richly endowed, whose overthrow and failure is chargeable to an equipment too great for conscience to invest for the use of life. The radiant promise of life's beginning lies half-formed, like tainted fruit, which mocks the promise of the spring. Therefore it is that the temper and tone of the nature is to be the very first care. If this is wisely done, it will come to be, not a law imposed from without, but a grace appearing from within. This is the meaning of that saying, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." It was the law of the spirit of life. We speak of a man of fine temper, as we speak of the fine temper of a weapon or a tool. If two thousand

years have been spent in trying to discover the secret of Damascus steel, it would seem to be labor, thought, and care well bestowed to find a texture and substance in our own natures which shall keep a perfect edge and show an unflagging pliability and spring under the strain and use of life. The whole man is to be "tempered together," and "compacted by that which every joint supplieth": this is Paul's requirement for the full-grown man. Nor does this cause us to run into the danger of artificiality or a lack of simplicity. One of the simplest of all musical instruments is a violin: we do not measure its resource by the complexity of structure, but by the quality of its tone. So there are natures, mellow, simple, rich, which give forth a tone, when touched, which is worth more than any word which accompanies it.

This is the unconscious influence of a nature attuned to the sublimest harmonies. It makes what we can do of better quality: its cultivation shows in all it accomplishes. The unconscious, unintentioned impact of one sweet, rich, and true inner life upon the inner life of another is the source of finest usefulness. The good we intentionally do may be well or ill timed, may be the best or worst for those who are its object. However sincere and earnest the desire to serve, it is not always service well bestowed. But that person whose nature has been made strong and true by thought, by prayer, by communion with all that is highest and best, however he may fail by the foolish standards of society, so called, however unpractical he may be counted "where merchants most do congregate," however he may miss the mark as judged by worldly ambition, still will he purify the atmosphere where he enters; he will re-en-

force the feeble whom he approaches ; he will rebuke sin without naming it ; and he will raise to the highest power the efficiency of those who may be doing not much, but only what they can.

I desire to speak with emphasis here, because our plans so often fail, bitter disappointments so often supervene, our ambitions come to nothing. What in such a time as that can console a man better than to have it said, and to know that it is truly said, that he did what he could ?—not what was expected of him, not what he expected of himself, but to the utmost “ what he could.” And what can reduce our false standards to reason, or make our plans accord with what is natural, or set our will in harmony with that great Will that framed the Universe,— what, in a word, can so sustain a man’s endeavor, and tide him over the risk of failure, as to be in very truth intent upon a complete self-development ? Then nothing shall be able to dull the temper of his soul, nor make his tone ring false. Such a task is becoming to the sons of God.

We may comfort ourselves really thus in the midst of our limitations. Then, too, the consideration that the standard of judgment has to do with us, and with no other, will console us in apparent failure, even while it quickens our conscience, so that probability of failure is made remote.

“ She hath done what she could,” said Jesus of Mary ; and this commendation had in it no faltering tone of disappointment. The grace and beauty of her simple act had come to her as a possession of the soul, while she sat at the feet of the Divine Teacher, in what seemed to her busy sister idleness and indifference. The “ good part she had chosen ” had “ not been taken away from her ” : it was now a part of herself.

Friends, here are our possessions also. Our hands will fall empty at last, our feet will falter on the path we tread, our busy and ambitious lives be still; but we need not therefore be poor or forsaken or alone, or ashamed of our lives, as we look back over them. *We will still be entire, having ourselves and God.*









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BY

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THE CONFLICT OF DUTIES

BY

THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

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## THE CONFLICT OF DUTIES.

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“Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought good work upon me.”—*MATT. xxvi. 10.*

EVERY one knows the story,—the woman who pours the precious ointment on the Master’s feet, the disciple who rebukes this waste of treasure, and Jesus taking sides, not as you might have expected, with him who pleaded for what seemed the larger use of a precious thing, but with the loving impulse which had prompted Mary of Bethany to pay her Master this seemingly fanciful and useless tribute.

We have here, it seems, the familiar conflict between your duty to some one near you and to other lives further off, but in greater need, or of the conflict between any claims that lie in wholly different directions, yet both appealing strongly to your sense of what is right and generous.

These conflicting claims of duty are sometimes among the hardest experiences of life and most painful to the most conscientious people. Is there not a suggestion in this gospel story of the principles that must enter into all such cases?

Notice that Jesus, on other occasions, sometimes decides in favor of the narrower, sometimes of the wider, field of action. Better be reconciled to one’s

brother than to bring a gift to the altar,—that is, the narrower against the wider service; but another disciple, who asked, “Let me go first and bury my father,” is commanded to leave even that sacred duty and to follow the Messiah. He himself also twice rejects his mother seeking him, and declares that all who do his Father’s will are equally his own. Thus we see constantly in our Master’s life that the question of wide and narrow, large or small, does not enter. To him the greatness of an opportunity was not measured by the number of persons immediately concerned, but by the *quality* of act put forth. His few words to the woman of Samaria were as precious and fruitful as his preaching to the multitudes in Galilee or his rebuke to the rulers of Jerusalem. He neither sought publicity nor shunned it. The multitudes followed after him, not he after the multitudes. His great actions, his great words, *never* sprang from any inquiry as to their effect upon a smaller or greater number of persons, but always from the spontaneous movement of his whole nature to what was holiest, highest, and best, because of its intrinsic worthiness before God. His first concern, then, was never with the appearance or effect of his life upon other *men*, but with its intrinsic quality, its conformity to the will and the character of his Father in heaven.

Here, then, is one principle which often helps in conflicts of duty,—that our first concern is with the quality of life.

The desire to do good to others is indeed a stirring of what is highest in our natures and a reflection in

us of the divine love itself. But you often need to remember that the greatest service you can render to a fellow-creature is to show him what in your own soul is best and "likest God," and so to bring him the help and inspiration of a higher life.

This is what the apostle means when he says that, if we have not *charity*, nothing we can give, though it were our bodies to be burned, is of any use. In the deepest sense, it is not what you bring to other men of your possessions and your talents that helps the world forward, but what you give of yourself in giving them. The *quality* of life is our first concern.

How often we take hold of these things from the wrong end! It is taught us as one of our Christian duties that we should visit the sick and help the poor.

Many people, therefore, in a mechanical, lifeless way go about (as they think) "doing good." All who truly love the sick and the poor know what an encumbrance this formal and lifeless philanthropy is to the real work of bringing life, help, and strength to suffering men. Suppose you were sick yourself, or very poor, anxious, and discouraged, which would you like best,—to have some bustling individual come in with a basket and a tract,—or would you rather have that person come, even with empty hands, who took away your fear, your discouragement, who made you feel that human love is strong and true, that God is faithful, and who, after sitting with you a little while, left behind that spiritual light which follows such angels of God? All your gifts and all your doing good to the poor are of little worth indeed unless you bring with them, and express by their means,

the highest quality of life; unless to all the lesser givings you can add this precious spikenard of love, and nobleness, and true prayer, so that as in Bethany of old "the whole house is filled with the odor of that ointment."

Nowhere more than in the choice between *conflicting duties* is it plainly true that the motive makes the deed.

It is this high quality of the life inspiring the action, that makes any action worthy. This is equally true, whether it be in a wider or narrower circle of claims that the action lies. To know the merit of the choice, you must know what kind of spiritual life lies behind it. Sometimes a man's conscientious loyalty to personal claims leads him to give what seems almost too precious to sacrifice. How many a faithful and excellent son, in order to be of immediate service to his family, has sacrificed his education, changed his career, and adopted a mode of life for which neither his tastes nor capacities fitted him!

We honor in our hearts the man who thus sacrifices the scholar's life, because we have the secret sense that such self-sacrificing love, such faithfulness and patience, is nobler and better, is a greater spiritual conquest, than any of intellectual achievement. Yet it is by no means certain in any particular case that this greatness of soul is the moving power. There are some who claim the merits of self-renunciation for what is little more than spiritual inertia. This sacrifice of a higher activity for the sake of mere bread-winning may not spring from pure love and faithfulness. It may come from some false standard

in the man's own mind, or in that of his friends, as to real values of life. He may set himself to earn money for that which is not bread and labor for that which satisfieth not. To maintain, let us say, the conventional requirements of the social position which his family claim, to gratify the social ambitions of some worldly-minded woman, or to meet some soft requirement of luxury and self-indulgence in his own habits, many a widely gifted man has renounced his higher life and made himself, not a martyr to poverty or to domestic love and duty, but a martyr to Mammon, "the ruler of the darkness of this world." Such sacrifices bring no peace to the soul, and such martyrdom no crown, because they were not born in the first place of heroism, love, and spiritual light, but of mere timidity and worldliness.

Is it not true, then, that in every such conflict of duties the rightness of one's choice lies far more in the spirit and motive of the decision than in the after consequences? Satisfy your conscience, follow your highest sense of right, and, come what may, you need never regret or feel ashamed. Let me pass from this point to another principle which helps us in the conflict of duties. We see it in the reply of youthful Jesus in the temple: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Or again in the saying, "Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I to this hour." What I mean is that those duties are first which fit in with your sense of your *vocation* in God's world, and which belong to the unity of your life, to the best use of your talents so far as you know them. In other words, some



duties are constructive, and help to build up and strengthen your powers for the rendering of still greater service in the same line. Many so-called claims are to things that waste and scatter us. Your first duty is to maintain the integrity of your vocation and to do those things which are related to the central work and purpose of your life. Let every man have his vocation. Let every life be a consistent whole. We all have some instinctive sense of this. Any morning newspaper can suggest to you many admirable lives of usefulness which you distinctly know are not your business. The great benefit of having plan, purpose, and wholeness in your life is that it saves you so many perplexing questions of detail. It is the idle, purposeless individual who is perpetually debating what to do next. Once organize your life around some central purpose, and all the floating motives and varied claims of your unpurposed life will begin to crystallize and become definite. Such a consistent purposed life need not be narrow. There are some people, indeed, as there are horses, who should always be driven with blinders, to keep them on the road. But any strong, large nature can see widely and act in many varied lines, yet not fail to co-ordinate and organize life. Whatever is done by one of these constructive natures, you feel the force of the whole personality behind it; but, on the other hand, how many characters there are which seem to have no inner consistency, nor even any outward unity! Such lives are moved to and fro by changeable impulses and the mere accidents of their lot, being, as the apostle says, like a wave of the sea, driven by the

wind and tossed. There is something of this spiritual vagabondage in us all. How shall we have more of a unifying power in our lives?

Never can we do it fully by any plan of work, by any ambition, however large, for outward result, though these plans and ambitions all help to steady the will and save the waste of powers. The only purpose that can give real unity to life is some spiritual purpose, some moral ambition, some aim that reaches above the outward and changing condition of life to the very centre of life itself. Suppose it is simply your purpose in all circumstances to be a brave, true, and honest man. The very presence of that motive in you gives unity to your character and consistency to all that you do. Or suppose your spiritual ambition is far broader and higher. Suppose it were the highest possible; namely, that, like your Master, you should always carry in your heart and express in every action something of the love of God our Father for men. The larger your spiritual aspiration, the higher it reaches toward Infinite Love, the more broadly it flows out to your fellow-men, the greater the *range* and *variety* of action which it will be possible for you to make truly your own. You cannot make your life a unity by your intellectual consistency, but only by the dominance in you of some great power of love, some mastering desire after righteousness.

And so in every seeming conflict of duties we have this principle: choose that which is the expression of your highest self, do that thing which is in the best sense worthily *characteristic* of you. In the lower plane this comes to us as faithfulness to our calling

and vocation among men. On the higher plane it comes to us as faithfulness to our own best spiritual insight. Of two apparent duties, that alone is truly yours which inspires you to your true life as a child of God.

Thus far I have spoken as if our highest duty were to ourselves and to the quality and consistency of our own lives; but is goodness only a branch of self-culture? Have we not duties to others which are far higher than any we can owe ourselves? Was not the life of Jesus a perpetual self-giving? Yet remember how he said such things as "*My peace I leave with you,*" "*Fulfil ye my joy,*" "*I speak that which I have seen of my Father.*" Remember that the truest benefit you can bring to any brother soul is the gift of life, and you can only impart what you have. Such peace and joy and light as God shall give you it will be your dearest blessing to *give* as freely as you have received; but, to "let your light shine," the light must be already in you. And so the duty of *giving*, the duty of distribution, though not second to any other, is nevertheless dependent upon the quality and constructiveness of your life.

Let us consider finally this glad duty of *distributing the gifts* which is laid upon us all. Now in our earthly conditions the very idea of giving implies some inequality between giver and receiver. You feel your brother's need, and give to his emptiness of your greater store. This divine compassion is a holy thing, and it is good to feel this claim of a brother's weakness upon our strength. But this is not the highest form of giving, still less the highest gladness

of it. Even here on earth we have some foretaste of the manner in which the angels are said to share their gifts of heavenly joy, not moved by the sight of emptiness in each other, but because their own natures overflow with love, and it is more blessed to give than to receive. This giving which is the *overflow* of your life toward other lives, the natural utterance of some music in you, the spontaneous tribute of your life-treasure, as one king gives to some brother prince whom he delights to honor,—when your heart touches that largeness of a heavenly charity, is it not the crown of all other blessedness?

It is this which Jesus approved when Mary of Bethany poured out costly spikenard on her Master's head. He saw in this large and royal way of giving a spirit which must enter into all the actions by which you would really bring a benefit to any brother soul. We cannot always remain in this exalted mood of overflowing love. The poor are always with you. Always with you is the claim of human weakness and need, but only rarely are you visited by the heavenly enthusiasm such as the Master's presence brought to those who loved him. But I think the lesson of the story is that in this higher kind of giving we have the type of what all gifts should be. Give because you overflow. In all your ministries to human need let this largeness of soul be felt. The poor ye have always with you; and, O my friends, none feel so quickly as the poor and suffering do the vast difference between your sorrowful pity of them and your life-giving abundant love,—the love which does not stoop as to one below it, but feels itself glad and honored

as one who serves the King. Have you never said, in some weakness or poverty of your own: "I do not want another's pity, making me ashamed. Come to me, my strong brother, as my equal and my friend. Let me know by the largeness and freedom of your goodness to me that you see in me not this poor creature who needs you, but the Christ in me, the nobler self in me, which you honor as it struggles to light"? If you have felt this claim in your own heart, let it be the interpretation of what that love is which you owe to others,—the love which is the overflowing of your life; the love which honors itself, and goes forth on the errand of mercy as if to meet the King.

Does some one say: "I fail of this *abundance* of life. Mine cannot be the overflowing heart. I know the hardness, but not the joy, of my Master's service"? But are you sure? Have you not in all your nature one gift and quality that has this overflowing power? What possible life of our frail nature can be abundant all round? Can you not find, like Mary in that humble home in Bethany, some one treasure you may spare? Begin where you can. Follow that one line in your life where your heart reaches out gladly to the larger good. In that one line, in that one poor treasure which you spend in an enthusiastic affection, you will find the secret of life, and so go on from more to more.

And so, finally, I would draw from this golden story these three helps in the conflicting claims of duty:—

Strive for the higher quality of life, as contrasted

with mere outward effectiveness. Seek those things which are constructive, which make your life a consistent whole. And, finally, cultivate your best enthusiasms. Learn how to abound until all your service both of God and man shall be what some of it is now,—not a painful struggle, but overflowing song.









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TRANSFORMATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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## TRANSFORMATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

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“God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts.”—GAL. iv. 6.

THE religion that sprang from the mind and heart of Jesus was the religion of his own life. It was HIS religion,—the way he himself naturally looked at things, the way he himself naturally felt about things. Looking upwards, he saw that God is our Father. Looking around, he saw that man is our brother. Feeling his own sonship, he felt ours. Feeling his own brotherly tenderness, he laid the foundations of a universal human brotherhood. The kingdom of God he preached was the property of every one who accepted and rejoiced in this sonship and this brotherhood. Whoso loved it entered into the kingdom of love.

At first this religion was without a name. It existed nameless, but strong, tender, and true,—a hope, a joy, a divine guidance,—in his own heart and in the hearts of those that loved him and it; but, when it became increasingly evident that vast numbers of men and women longed to look at things in the way that Jesus looked and to feel about things in the way that Jesus felt, then this new movement inevitably gave birth to a new name, which was very likely first given it by its enemies, but was finally

adopted by its friends,—Christianity, or the religion of Jesus, the Christ.

To-day its sound has gone out into all lands and its words to the ends of the world. It reaches me in my study in Syracuse, bids me think, feel, and write simply and purely for human benefit,—nothing for strife or vainglory, but all for truth and right and helpfulness. It reaches you here, bidding you lift up your hearts, and think upon your vast hopes and your solemn responsibilities, commanding you to see all things in its light and to act as if the whole world belonged to it by right divine.

It is of the transformations which this Christianity, this religion of Jesus, has undergone in its passage through the world that I am to speak.

The divine spirit of necessity pours itself into the mould of the times, takes the shape of the times. If the mould is Greek thought, the spirit suffuses Greek thought; but its action is always modified by the peculiarities of Greek thought. In mediæval times, the world is mediæval. In a feudal age, the all-pervading feudal system will stamp itself on the system of church government. Our own noble Francis E. Abbot has said that Catholicism is the legitimate outcome of Christianity. He is partially quite right! Mediæval Catholicism is the legitimate outcome of Christianity in mediæval times.

Let us, then, look at the various transformations which time has wrought in the religion of Jesus.

The religion of Jesus is pre-eminently a religion of conduct. Its main business is to teach you how to feel and act toward God and toward your fellow.

Its fundamental code of law, in the space of a single century, went round the civilized world. To-day we have its essential features in the Sermon on the Mount; but, if Matthew and Luke were lost to-day, sunk under the sea, it could be all recovered from "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," and from Justin Martyr.

Summed up in nineteenth-century language, it is as follows:—

1. The Maker of the universe is the Father of men.
2. The law of the universe is the law of the life of its Maker.
3. That life is one, and has one principle and one only, which is blessing and blessing and forevermore blessing.
4. All finite lives, living as they do in the midst of the Infinite Life, must make the law of that life their own. Living thus, they themselves become a part of the blessing. Theirs is the blessed life. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
5. To all that live otherwise and as long as they live otherwise, discord and misery of necessity will come. The law of blessing without can never alter, and will forever come into collision with the law of cursing within.

This Jesus saw, felt, lived, and loved; and his sublime legacy to the world is this. Instantly the new law began to produce new conduct. The thoughtful men of the Roman world were amazed to find suddenly appearing in their midst hundreds of thousands of chaste, pure, tender Christian matrons and hundreds of thousands of pure and high-minded men. It was the

wonderful fascination, the unique attractiveness, of the new conduct, that won the world to its side.

My heart goes out to those Corinthians who in the midst of that wicked city washed themselves pure from lustful taint in the waters of the new baptism; to those Thessalonians who were striving "to walk worthy of the God who called them into his own kingdom and glory."

It was too good to last. Of it the world was not worthy, is not yet worthy. Too soon, alas! we arrive at the first transformation of Christianity, which is,—

#### I. From Conduct to Belief.

The keen-witted, subtle Greek mind found itself at home at once in making word-definitions of the new life, and very soon belief about the life began to usurp the place of the life itself.

Remember always that conduct was never wholly banished from the Church, even in its worst days. The life and mind of Jesus were elements too potent to be wholly juggled away by any form of words. Indeed, the change of front from conduct to belief took well-nigh three centuries to effect, so stubborn a thing did the life-element prove to be. The various steps of the process are not always traceable. Certainly, it went on with increasing velocity when once Christianity cut loose from Israel, who had been drilled in conduct, had been taught to "consider her ways" for a thousand years, and fell into the hands of the Greek,—the quick-witted, intelligent, philosophic Greek,—who, alas! in conduct was almost wholly undrilled.

It is a supremely significant fact that for those

great epoch-making laws of conduct, those laws whose promulgation started the new life, you must go to the first three Gospels. The Fourth Gospel is already more than half-way to the great transition. It is belief,—belief *about* Jesus, belief that he is the only begotten Son, belief that God sent him into the world that those who believe on him should not perish, but have everlasting life, which is the very heart and core of the Fourth Gospel.

In the Fourth Gospel the Greek mind first distinctly influences Christianity for weal and for woe. That wonderful critical intelligence, which had to work whether there was sufficient material to work upon or not, which was by nature scientific, in an age when scientific facts were all too few, found its most congenial work in systematizing and defining the new faith. The work of two and a half centuries culminated in the Nicene Creed, which is certainly the masterpiece of ancient Christian thinking. In it are contained the germs of a true genealogy of the awful, the immortal soul of man. Begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, God out of God, Light out of Light, very God out of very God,—all this, which the sacred instinct of their highest thought affirmed of Jesus, is ideally true of Man. A great intellectual-spiritual achievement, but mark it well,—in all that creed is no single word about conduct, not one single life-direction to a single human soul.

II. It is probably not quite historically correct to say that the second transformation of Christianity was from belief to organization. It is certain, however,



that in those days you could not have had unity of organization without unity of belief. Not till unity of belief had been won by terrific convulsions, by disputes innumerable, by battles, murders, and martyrdoms, did the wonderful organism of the Church arrive at its astonishing completeness. We may fairly say that the next conspicuous phase, if not transformation, of Christianity was its wonderful organization, — that organization which invented the word “Christendom,” the most wonderful single conception the human mind has ever given birth to, save only the thought of humanity itself.

Of course, the Christian organization really began much further back.

A common life-principle inevitably founds a community. A Christian community was formed immediately in every city where Paul preached. The Revelator, say in A.D. 68, writes to the angels of seven churches in Asia; that is, I suppose, to the leader, the overseer, the episcopos of each church. Episcopacy is a divine institution; that is, it is a natural one. It is sure to come up in some form or other in a growing community. If there are fifty churches in and around Ephesus, there will be of course a pastor and deacons to each church; but some one must be appointed to look out for the well-being of the whole, for the advancement of the cause outside the fifty churches, for the advancement of brotherly love and mutual help within the fifty churches, to guide the united power for help of the fifty churches, to lead the fifty churches in the attack on the world that lies in wickedness. In short, a bishop comes up inevit-

ably in the natural order of things. If the leader is a large man, large results will follow. When not only the church of Ephesus, but all the churches of Asia Minor feel that they have a common duty to Asia Minor, that the gospel message must be sent to all parts of Asia Minor, then an archbishop of Asia Minor comes up. When Asia Minor feels itself at one in the work with the churches of Syria, Egypt, Africa, Gaul, Spain, Italy,—feels, in short, that the field is the world,—then a bishop of all bishops, a pope, *Papa*, Father of all Christendom, comes up.

When the great flood of barbarism overthrew all the towers of Roman civilization, the Church alone stood erect. When the waters began to abate, she went to work at once, the guardian of order, the protector of the weak, the hope and promise of a better day.

I ask a great artist to paint me this great historic picture,—the meeting of Benedict the monk and Totila, King of the Goths, the Gothic king mounted on his strong war-horse, fair-haired, blue-eyed, who never yet has met his match, before whom all men tremble, and the dark-eyed, lean, sickly monk, whom one touch of that stalwart arm would suffice to sweep away. But in the monk's hand is the cross; and, in the name of one who hung on that, he bids the king do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with his God. The king has met his match. Monk and monarch are two noble equals before God.

In the wonderful organization of the Church at this dreadful moment lay the hope of the world. Chaos has come again, but through the Church God says,

“Let there be light.” It is highly important to observe that, as the age of belief was first modified by the age of conduct which preceded it, so its one-sided results were again still further modified in the age of organization, which happily fell under the control of the Western, the Latin, the working Church, which brought in many directions conduct once more to the front.

Eastern asceticism fasted and wept, and saw visions, and prophesied, and worked miracles until the day when the hordes of Islam came, and swept it away. Western asceticism worked and built, turned the desert into a garden, uplifted the poor, dignified labor, and planted the seeds of the higher civilization yet to be.

The mighty organization of the Church was the same in all Christian lands. It built the cathedrals. It made the universities. It taught the scholars. It preserved the precious relics of ancient thought.

In the Middle Ages this amazing system reached its acme of perfection. How strong it was is shown by the time it lasted. Think of it! When Columbus discovered America, this system remained still unbroken. It was the pope, Pope Alexander VI., the most infamous mortal that ever sat on the papal chair, who divided the heathen world into two hemispheres by a line drawn through mid-Atlantic from pole to pole, and gave the Eastern half to Portugal and the western to Spain.

But in a few years from this very act came,—

III. The third great transformation of Christianity,—the Reformation. That brought to the front a

great force in human nature, which the vast organization of the Church had steadily kept in the background,—kept, rather, under lock and key,—the right of private judgment in things concerning the soul.

The particular conclusions of the reformers are not worth much. Luther's account of the world is as far away from us as that of his Catholic opponents. In an antagonistic age things will always be put in antagonistic fashion; that is, in an inevitably one-sided fashion. But the reformers, one and all, began to exercise their *private judgment*. The first exercise of private judgment is sure to be crude, narrow, one-sided; but use strengthens faculty, and the use of private judgment starts a new epoch.

Luther setting up as private pope in matters of doctrine is a sorry sight enough; but Luther, resolved to translate the Bible into his beloved German tongue, without asking leave or license from any man under heaven, prompted only by the longings of his own great heart to open the gates of righteousness to his beloved countrymen, gives an epoch-making moment to the history of man's soul.

From Luther's day till now the right of the individual to his own beliefs has won its way, step by step, through conflict after conflict, until, at last, it stands acknowledged by the whole world of thinking men and women.

Protestant historians of the Reformation seem to start with the assumption that the *doctrines* of the reformers, taken as a whole, are vastly superior to the doctrines of Catholicism. In most instances the reverse is the case.

We may say, indeed, that at first private judgment is sure to give, as it did then give in many cases, much poorer and more one-sided results than the impersonal public judgment, which has grown imperceptibly for a thousand years. Most of the criticism of the reformers on that public judgment was captious and narrow. Justification by faith without works is a narrower thought than justification by faith that works by love. Eternal punishment, beginning irrevocably at once after the moment of death, was a sorry substitute for that beneficent purgatory whose pains and fires would at last make a much larger number meet for the bliss of heaven. An infallible Bible was a yoke as heavy and much less flexible than an infallible pope. Why prayers offered by us for loved ones beyond the veil are not quite as legitimate as prayers offered for us by loved ones beyond the veil I am constitutionally unable to see. Cannot the swift spirit of God convey the force of the one just as swiftly and as surely as the force of the other? The sudden desertion of Mariolatry itself was no unmixed good, if men saw less of divine and motherly tenderness enthroned in heaven.

I get impatient when the Puritan fathers declaim on the iniquity of using the ring in marriage, or stamp into the dust the beautiful Christmas festival, for the poor reason that the pagan world had rejoiced at that season for thousands of years; and, when I go to an English cathedral, and see the carved work thereof broken with axes and hammers, see the noseless statues that yet remain, and remember that all its storied windows were smashed to pieces to the glory

of the Puritans' God, I can only say that the deliberate destruction of the records of the faith, love, and adoration of one's own fathers and mothers is only saved from disgust by the narrow, pig-headed sincerity that prompted it.

But, all this being said, the Reformation was an epoch-making event. Mankind as individuals had first to dare to think, and then to learn to think, and then to learn to think better by thinking on the mistakes of their own previous thinking. God sends us all our blessings before we are fit to receive them. The possession of the blessing is the only way to learn its use. No slave was ever fit for freedom, for only the possession of freedom can make the man fit to use it. The Irish are not fit for home rule, and never will be fit until they have it.

The wonderful freedom of thought which we enjoy to-day is the lineal descendant of those very thoughts of the reformers which would have consigned us and our freedom of thought to perdition. Century by century the thoughts of men have been widened by the process of thinking, until at last yet a new epoch, yet one more transformation, and the last.

IV. The last transformation of Christianity will be the transformation into the universal religion of mankind. This transformation is going on before our eyes. Every large and inclusive thought, every generous and joyous recognition of the excellences in other beliefs, helps on the day when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ."

There are three religions, and three only, which

claim to be world-religions,—the three “missionary religions,” Buddhism, Christianity, Mohammedanism. If a fourth religion, as yet unknown, is not to absorb them all, which of these three is destined to absorb the other two? Let us see.

All religions are incomplete, and therefore incapable of including the whole of mankind, which do not include adoring recognition of the Infinite Surrounding Life, which do not reveal the Father, which do not give to man the dignity of a divine sonship. Herein lies the fatal defect of Buddhism. It is tragic to think that Buddha in his noblest efforts to help mankind could not see that a tenderness greater than his own was coming in upon him and helping him to pity and to help.

All religions are incomplete, and therefore incapable of including the whole of mankind, which do not include an ideal devotion to man as man, without any limitation of creed. Herein lies the fatal defect of Mohammedanism. It is tragic to think that Mohammed, filled with awful adoration of the One Supreme, should himself have hated and taught his followers to hate the unbelievers who refused to accept his religion.

To sum up, all religions are incomplete which do not include complete fatherhood, sonship, and brotherhood. Of the three great religions, Christianity alone proclaims all the three; and these are the three essential elements of a world-religion.

Will Christianity, then, absorb and bring to an end the two other great world-religions? In one sense, yes, as one complete analysis includes and brings to

an end two partial analyses, each of which contained a necessary part of the whole. In another sense, no. A world-Christianity needs a world of men and women eager for a higher life. Millions of Mohammedans and Buddhists have been educated by their creeds to feel this eagerness. If the Buddhists, for instance, shall be found to contribute more life-force to the world-religion than the Christians, theirs will be the dominant life-force in the world-religion.

A Buddhist, if you tell him of infinite tenderness, of divine charity, will see the point at once.

It is not merely that his mind is ready for conversion to Christianity on this side, but that he — and he is many millions — will add to the great world-religion the positive contribution of a prepared heart, a natural kindness which it has taken two thousand years to develop. Christianity as a life requires hundreds of millions of lives of this sort.

The multitude of Buddhists is very great. Other things being equal, the number of tender, compassionate souls and the intensity and force of that tenderness and compassion measure the amount of this kind of life-force contributed to the great world-religion.

A Mohammedan, if you speak to him of the Divine Omnipotence, of submission to the Divine Will, sees the point at once.

It is not merely that his mind is ready for conversion to this part of Christianity, but that he — and he is many millions — will add to the great world-religion the positive contribution of millions of wills prepared to submit to the will of God, when once that will is known. Islam is the religion of those who



submit to the will of God. If Islam shall be found to contribute to the great world-religion a mightier mass of will-force prepared instantly and joyously to obey the Perfect Divine Will than Christendom can furnish, then, so far, Islam will have given the largest contribution of the needed will-force to the great world-religion.

But I hazard little in saying that, in spite of the innumerable follies, ignorances, blind prejudices, and yet blinder conceits which have afflicted Christendom, there is in Christendom to-day a vast preponderance of capacity to guide mankind toward a nobler future, a vastly greater power to wisely, temperately, yet firmly criticise the sacred writings and institutions of the past, a vastly greater scientific knowledge of the universe and its forces, and, finally, a vastly greater comprehension of what the complete will of God is and of what man's whole duty to man is.

The hopelessly pessimistic character of the Buddhist doctrine, its narrow contempt for the life that now is, its lack of comprehension of the all-embracing fatherhood and motherhood of the Infinite Source of life, incapacitate it for the task of world-guidance. Its criticism of "God the Creator" — trenchant, indeed, as against the worn-out idea of a God outside the universe, directing its movements from without, making worlds out of nothing, and bidding them return to nothing again, — loses all force and point when aimed at the eternal Spirit-Foundation on whose infinite bosom all worlds and beings alike rest, the law of whose life is the law of theirs, — yea, part of whose law and life they are. Not world-guidance can Buddhism

give, but it will contribute hundreds of millions of hearts tender and true to the mighty central love-force of the world-religion.

The unintellectual character of Islam, its fierce fanaticisms, born of the Koran itself, illustrated by Mohammed himself, its ugly disregard of human lives outside of its own creed, its desperate clinging to polygamy and slavery, incapacitate it for the tremendous task of world-guidance. Its task is still, as it has been hitherto, with the inferior races as a whole, though its grand life-long war against drunkenness, its simple steadfastness in prayer, its steady appeal to the Divine Judgment, and its childlike submission to the Divine Will are grand contributions to the total force of the great world-religion. "There is no other God but God" will still be proclaimed from the minarets of the temples of the future.

These three, then,—Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed— are the three great religious leaders of the world; but Jesus stands in the midst. When he proclaims, "Blessed are the merciful," the face of Buddha lights up with a heavenly smile. When he prays, "Not my will, but thine, be done," the stern face of Mohammed softens into an awe-struck adoration of the One Supreme. But he alone unites the two great commandments into one heavenly life which shall one day be the life of the world-religion.

I look over the mighty world, and try to take stock of its total spiritual wealth. Whatever of poetic, prophetic, saintly, manly, womanly insight the past has sent down to us or the present is gaining, whatever of high honor, noble forbearance, helpfulness,

gentleness, forgiveness, there is, either in man's earth or man's heaven, whatever of capacity to heal the wounds of mankind, whatever of wise command of the world's resources, whatever of wise guidance for human souls there is,—all this is part of the capital stock of the great world-religion. "The kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it." I see the peoples of all lands and times hastening to bring their tribute to this new temple of God, which is to fill the whole earth. Greece brings her thought, Rome her law, and Israel her religion. The Hindu brings his mystic, dreamy sense of the vastness of the universe of space and time, of its awful oneness in the midst of its million-sided diversity; the Chinese, his patient labor, his love of the Golden Rule, his tender loyalty to the sacred ties of home. The Italian brings his inborn gift of song; the Frenchman, his charming vivacity, his wonderful power of seeing the bright side of life; the German, his sustained force of thought, his all-devouring industry in study; the Englishman, his steady good sense, his instinct of freedom; the United States, their matchless capacity for self-government, their unique trust in the people's instinct of right. Dutchman, Norwegian, Russian, Spaniard, Persian, each shall bring his gifts to the altar, while all together shall partake of that divine communion service, that holy sacrament, which is the sharing together of all the spiritual wealth that man has gathered in man's earth and man's heaven.





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WEEKLY EXCHANGE

A SERIES OF SERMONS

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP  
THOMAS R. SLICER

JOSEPH MAY  
THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

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THE JEW AND THE ROMAN; OR, LOVE  
CONQUERS ALL.

BY

JOSEPH MAY

Pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia

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## THE JEW AND THE ROMAN; OR, LOVE CONQUERS ALL.

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“And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.”—1 JOHN iv. 21.

Scripture lesson, Acts x.

THE most interesting point in the narrative I have read you from the Book of the Acts is not the mental impressions experienced by the two actors in the story, nor their somewhat remarkable coincidence. I will expend no time to-day in examining these things. Simple principles of natural interpretation suffice to account both for the existence of the narrative itself and for the occurrence of the circumstances it records. The substance of it may very well be true. Such things are happening daily. The history of the world might be written in legends of the marvellous. For one, I am willing to say, in general, that I have no doubt that the mysterious phenomena assigned in all ages to the spiritual world—presentiments, apparitions, visions, clairvoyance, and the rest—point to important realities of which we now know little, and to laws which, now obscure, may some day be intelligible and of practical importance in philosophy, if not in life.

Of these things nothing more. To-day let us regard rather the moral lesson of this incident. It is



stranger in this respect than the other. Imagine, if you can, the captain of a Federal — perhaps I ought to say Confederate — company, in our late war, yielding to a visionary impression so far as to send three of his private soldiers some sixty or seventy miles (that was about the distance from Cæsarea, then a great commercial city, to Joppa, the smaller seaport of Jerusalem), to consult a freedman who should have professed to be the bearer of a new religious dispensation. Such a case would be a parallel not much, if at all, overdrawn. The Roman government, the most powerful of the world then, perhaps since, was always tolerant of national peculiarities in its subjects; but its soldiery were brutal and arrogant, and this particular officer was not a Roman by adoption, but an Italian born, as the story implies. His name is pure Latin, and that of an ancient family indeed, and one very celebrated. The Scipios, the Gracchi, and Sulla were Cornelii. Of such individual Romans the very name was pride. The conquered enemies of Rome were by theory all slaves. Her native people felt so toward them.

On the other hand, this fisherman at Joppa had his national prejudices. If any nation ever surpassed Rome in pride and exclusiveness, it was his. The Jews were no emperor's subjects — except by force. They were the people of God. Jewish discipline filled their mind with a conscientious aversion to foreigners, who throughout their history had been their rock of offence. Peter was not entirely cleansed of this prejudice by even this striking experience. Paul's freedom from it is to be explained by his birth

in a Gentile city and his Greek culture. You will notice that the original Jewish apostles never fully entered into the Christian idea of a universal religion. It was Paul, Timothy, Apollos, Barnabas, and Mark, —all men of Gentile associations— that spread Christianity over the pagan world. Of the Jewish apostles perhaps only Peter ever approached their catholicity; but, as I say, even he failed fully to grasp it.

Moreover, just at this time Rome and her officers were to the Jews the very synonym of oppression and cruelty. The publicans were classed with sinners and hated even more cordially than the vicious, because the taxes which they ground out were paid over to the invading Gentile tyrant. For Peter to hate Cornelius would have been as natural as for a Southerner after the war to hate an officer of the Freedman's Bureau.

Across such barriers two honest, earnest souls were led by the Spirit of God. By the Spirit of God, I say. I do not suppose a feathered seraph brought the message to Cornelius's chamber door, or that angelic hands drooped a tangible sheet over the tanner's cotage. Hungry men always dream, just as overfed ones do. Earnest minds in sleep give embodied shape to the longings of their waking hours. The Spirit of God comes to men differently. For us it is of import, chiefly, to learn by what *moral* forces (the true angels of God) men of powerful antagonistic prejudices may be brought to overcome them and to embrace in sympathy.

Peter's inspiration was love. At this present time

he was journeying through all parts, carrying spiritual life and, the records of the time assert, physical healing also, wherever he went. He had lately left Lydda, where he had attended a palsied old man (a Gentile), and travelled over to Joppa on an express errand of mercy. In so far as he was capable of accepting the gospel of Jesus, he had to accept the indwelling spirit of love to all mankind.

Cornelius's angel was aspiration, spiritual hunger, religious sensibility. The account reminds us of the other centurion, who sent in like wise to Jesus. The two had similar good repute among the Jews, whom each had dealt with kindly. These were they whom in every nation God has that fear and bear witness to Him, whether as Jehovah, Jove, or Lord. Paganism was not sufficient for the wants of souls like these. It taught an imperfect charity to hearts full of human kindness; only a vague, impersonal piety to one whose bosom yearned toward a personal God. I infer that these men had both of them adopted Judaism, or at least imbibed some of its ideas, for the phrase "a devout man" is technical, and means one who had taken steps for adoption into the Jewish Church. But Judaism had nothing in those days to quiet an uneasy, aspiring soul. Cornelius's heart was still unsatisfied, though he served God in his life, and prayed, perhaps blindly, to him every day. Such a one would go even to Nazareth, if any good could be got thence.

By the constitution of our nature, of our lower nature at least, we are all endowed with similar prejudices and repulsions with these men; and by the cir-

cumstances of society no one escapes re-enforcing them through habit, associations, and example.

Every peculiarity of our birth or training is the basis of self-pride and prejudice. Our own ways, habits, practical rules of life, moral judgments, religious ideas, become *standards* to us by which we inevitably judge others. No man can see a thing just as another sees it; and, not being thus able, he dislikes the other view. It does not satisfy him. He does not feel easy in it, more than in his neighbor's clothes. So far prejudices, remaining negative, are venial perhaps; but they become positive and hostile. We force our standards upon other people because we think them right, or we shrink away from others because they do not meet the demands of our tastes or our principles. We dislike not only peculiarities, but persons. We value our own peculiarities, not because they are valuable, but because they are ours. This is the foundation of social, religious, and personal exclusiveness. Peter would a few years before have looked upon Cornelius as only an "uncircumcised Gentile." Cornelius would have flouted Peter as a "dog of a Jew." So we allow not only sympathies to unite, but prejudices to divide us. I am perpetually restive under the petty limitations which sectarianism creates. Why am I to be shut up to men that think just as I do? In fact, I rather prefer as companion one who, feeling with me, sympathizing in my best aspirations, *thinks* differently. Such diversities stimulate thought, and keep us mentally alive. They enlarge our field of vision.

But each sect or party refuses for itself this help.

Then all partisanship belittles us, cutting off inspirations and illuminations. He who has a genuinely religious spirit must use every effort to break down all barriers between sect and sect, party and party, man and man; for these steps are direct toward the realization of true religion. And why so? Simply because true religion is summed up in love. But what is love? It is sympathy, not with individual men or any peculiarities of any man, but with man himself, wherever you find him. "Honor all men," says the apostle, this very Peter. What, bad men, vulgar men, stupid men? Yes, even these; not their badness, vulgarity, or stupidity, but honor *the men*; for manhood is *essentially* honorable. However warped, degraded, or unfortunate, it is a jewel of intrinsic lustre. The doctrine of the Trinity is chiefly false in its limitations. The spiritual essence of *every man* is divine.

We are at fault, then, in every case when we let a diversity of character or condition separate us from each other's hearts. It is certainly very hard to resist it. Not only opinion hedges us into groups mutually distrustful, but mere culture makes us sensitive. Wealth alone, with its physical refinements, will in a year make a man fastidious in a hundred new ways. The first stage of moral sensibility goes deeper still. Viciousness and vulgarity are repulsive to the merely moral. So long as we are in danger ourselves we can scarcely with safety tolerate the guilty one. Only exalted purity can move among harlots uncontaminated and unanxious, and say to the vice-stained, "Go, and sin no more."

Of such a one the shield which protects from contagion and preserves sympathy unimpaired is holiness. The timorous decency which casts off the sinful in his sin argues by this same token its own imperfectness. Yet an excuse to this effect would be thought quite creditable. Far meaner the petty attractions and aversions which govern much of our association with each other. It must needs be that caste and clique, like other offences, come; but one who moves only in the circle of those of his own culture will lose more than he gains.

One thing mingling with different ranks and persons of different culture has taught me,— it is Peter's lesson over again,— that the essential virtues of manhood are not confined to any one class or stratum in society. I have found unselfishness, simplicity, temperance, human kindness, piety among the rich, and self-respect, honor, delicacy, chasteness among the poor.

I knew once a man, born on a Western prairie, the companion of the Indian and the buffalo, able to talk the Indian gibberish and to dance their dances and to keep the trail with the best of them. I remember well how I was repelled from him when first I met him in all the fastidiousness of a boy whose little world was bounded by a college-fence; but I knew him long enough to find him one of the truest gentlemen I ever knew, chivalrous as a mediæval knight, almost abasing himself before a pure woman, a soul as pure and a heart as true as Sidney's or Bayard's. I loved him in life, and I honor him now he is dead. Which would you choose for your companion or your

son's companion, such a one or him who was once called "the first gentleman of Europe"?

But you shut yourself out from all such discoveries by over-strong prejudices or excess of fastidiousness. Have a purpose in your life, and you will need all classes of men and all sorts of culture, all schools of opinion and varieties of faith, to educate you into roundness of mind. Prejudices narrow. They blind the eye of the intellect, for they will not let it look out. They chill the heart, for its fire needs fuel of many sorts. Hence the word *bigot* suggests narrowness and coldness. But these are social as well as religious bigots. The aristocrat is as one-sided in mind as he is cold-hearted. There are virtues which chiefly flourish in unpropitious conditions, as on a Western prairie the golden-rod only comes up when a wheel has crushed the sward.

Here, then, I enter a protest, and most seriously, regarding a common notion which is honestly enough entertained by many, but which is sometimes so exaggeratedly trusted as to be the source of serious injustice. I refer to the belief in *first impressions*. I do not doubt that there is truth underlying this idea. The impression which a man's countenance and presence make upon you is no doubt a real reflection from something in his character. But remember that there is mingled in it also a reflection of your own, and *this* must be taken into account. Remember, too, that it is at best superficial, and, if it conveys a just, it must needs convey only a partial idea of character. Salient traits may strike you; but there are a thousand things whose legend is written on the physique so

delicately, if at all, that not a hasty glance can read it. For my own part, I think I have found this sensitive barometer wrong fully as often as right; or, at least, its testimony has been overborne by that from a hundred deeper sources, and has become insignificant.

In extreme cases, as of a Quilp, a Falstaff, a Uriah Heep, you may trust such rapid analyses. The rake, the miser, the hypocrite, carry self-conviction about with them, as the snake his rattle; but the universal rule is far more safely expressed otherwise. The deeper you know a man, the better you will find him. Get *him* out of the stratum of his whims and prejudices, and you find *some* truth and goodness down below. At all events, the law of charity is not invalidated by the discovery of character. To "see through" a person does not exonerate you from fraternal obligations. It only furnishes you a guide to your conduct. It is the chart of your apostolate. God puts us into the world to help each other. We had better have a millstone about our necks than cause any man to offend.

Now, it is only love which can make this work tolerable. For selfishness's sake we want to have our own caste, our own sect, and our own culture about us. It is very pleasant to move always among the refined, the educated, the liberal, the familiar. But love, which unites us with all, places us also in a sort of isolation, forbidding us to give ourselves too exclusively to any. Of all duties, it is the most omnipresent. But, I repeat, it is love which makes its own obligations tolerable.

What, then, is love? Simply, as we saw at the



outset, value of man as man, a true estimate of the awful preciousness of that thing which is the soul.

With such a sentiment come those which guide and help it. To one possessed by it like Jesus, it was meat and drink to do his Father's will among men. It is, with regard to human nature, what the enthusiasm of the artist or the scientist is in his sphere. It overcomes fastidiousness and petty aversions as science does the offensiveness of the laboratory and dissecting-room. It strengthens for labor, as the love of nature does. It gives patience with other's faults, and, above all, the capacity to understand men. *This* is the true revealer of character,—not physiognomy, but sympathy. Feel with a man, and you will feel as he does, and so understand why he feels so and is such as he is.

“He who loves best knows most.

Not earth nor heaven is read by scrutiny;  
But, touch me with a Saviour's love divine,  
I pierce at once to wisdom's inner shrine,  
And my soul seeth all things like an eye.

Is there a riddle, and resolved you need it?  
Love, only love, and you are sure to read it.”

For you never really reach any object till you give your heart to it. In what other walk of life does a man succeed who only gives half his heart? Therefore, Jesus demanded of his would-be followers *complete* renunciation. “Let the dead bury their dead. Follow thou me.” The men who have regenerated their fellows have been those who gave themselves to them, as he did.

A sentiment like this, this love, is superior to all mean ones. What will you care for external peculiarities, what force will prejudices have before it? If you recognize and reverence the gem, its ill-setting or its want of polish will be of small account with you. To reset and polish it are your sacred mission. This is the spirit in which we ought to move among fellow-men. It comes out brightly when philanthropy calls loud. See Florence Nightingale, braving the exposure of battle-fields and fever-hospitals; Dorothea Dix, an invalid girl, reinvigorated in body as well as inspired in mind by self-renouncing arduous charity, carrying joy and healing through asylum and prison. So of these noble men and women who, when our great war was over, went out and gave themselves to regenerate our freedmen. Perhaps it was poetic from a distance, but imagine in plain prose the self-sacrifice and discomfort of it. But I say to you, Verily, they had their reward.

How such persons *grow* in self-confidence and manliness, in sagacity, in knowledge of human nature! I knew a noble boy — for he was scarcely more — who gave up his profession, and entered a negro regiment in pure self-devotion. He became ruler over ten cities; and, when our flag was raised again at Fort Sumter, the boy was in command of Charleston and the fort and the region round about. Underneath simplicity this deep impulse to live for others was the fountain of soldierly ability. Love can make a gentlewoman contented and joyous in the slums of a city, nursing forlorn seeds of virtue into life in bosoms of newsboys and street-sweepers. I knew a sweet girl — but there

are many such — who would put off the delicate wardrobe of wealth, and in plain dress go all over the tenement-regions which disgrace one of our large cities. Filth, bad air, vice, rudeness, tedious tongues, disease and its dangers, want of appreciation, were nothing to her. *Why?* The *Christ* was in her soul. Indwelling *Love* was proof against poor physical offensiveness or moral annoyance.

So among ourselves. Love gives a universal rule of feeling and conduct. Love is the appreciation of the dignity of human nature and sympathy therewith. Then the rule is plain: to *assume* intrinsic excellence as at the bottom of every man's nature; to be on the lookout for goodness; to enhance virtues by reciprocity of sympathy; to study faults and leave God to judge them. Our duty is simply to help out His work of developing all men, not to arrogate his judgeship. A disagreeable man, like a vicious one, is only a knotty problem for us to grapple. If you leave him alone in his faults, if you increase them by petty vindictiveness, if you refuse your sympathy with *him* because God has permitted his peculiarities to be disagreeable to you, it is as if you passed the drunkard in the gutter or the beggar in his destitution. Here is a delicate but a pressing and important sphere of duty. Look about you in the circle in which you move. There is much for you to do. Bear with narrow-mindedness, and set it a good example. Explain away the harsh judgments which A is passing upon B. Repress gossip quietly. I have honored a woman for working a whole afternoon heading off the discussion of a scandal. Do not regard society as ordained for

your own enjoyment, but for the general good. At least utterly refuse to be the slave of mere impressions which a little effort would remove. Be yielding and pliable. In the sweet language of James, "Be easy to be entreated." I am preaching the gospel of true gentlemanliness. Paul was as thoroughly its apostle as he was that of Christianity. Nay, the two are identical. Paul was a true gentleman. Notice all through his Epistles, so fatherly in their character, so earnest but so delicate in their appeals, the tenor of the personal suggestions he is always making to his converts. Be forbearing. If one is overtaken in a fault, entreat him. Bear each other's burdens. Be not easily provoked. Be temperate. "Let your speech," he says, "be always with grace." "Be patient toward all men." His admonitions to the Ephesians and Colossians and to Timothy as to personal relations in the family and in society are a manual of good-breeding as well as of the true Christian spirit. The sum of them is that beautiful passage in Corinthians, the pæan of love. "Love bears long, but remains *kind*. It envies not, is not hasty-tempered, is not puffed up; *behaves* decorously, is not on the watch for its own enjoyment or rights, is not easily provoked, does not ascribe bad motives, rejoiceth not in iniquity (*i.e.*, is not glad to discover that some one has done wrong) but rejoices in the truth,—*i.e.*, in doing justice by all,—beareth (or, better, covereth, puts out of sight) all things, believeth all things,—*i.e.*, is ready to be persuaded of good. At least, it *hopeth* all things of every man, and, even if hope fails, continues to *endure* all things.

These all are maxims for our own social life. In that famous passage Paul is setting off against the great gifts of some the universal opportunities open to all. Better than eloquence, better than alms-giving, better than inspiration itself, is *love*, persistent kindness, forbearance, and good will among our own companions and friends. It is one of the three things which endure, and it is the greatest. It is the one thing which each may do for every other, which the humblest may do for the most exalted; and, of all things which the most favored may do for the most unfortunate, it is the best and the sweetest.

“The gift without the giver is bare.  
Who bestows himself with his alms feeds three,  
Himself, his hungry neighbor, and Me.”

But love itself is hard. Can we command it? Perhaps so, but only surely in one way. As human, it is scarcely possible to love all men. Faults, vices, weaknesses, ignorance, rudeness,—these are the mortal masks of half the manhood that we meet. I said it was the *essence* of manhood which our hearts must fasten on with veneration and with sympathy, and that this is in all divine. Only as we recognize and honor this can we overcome the superficial repulsions which antagonize us and the coldness and self-sufficiency which make us indifferent to each other.

What, then, is the basis of love to man? Plainly, love to God. The angel of Cornelius had brought his message to Peter before, or the noonday vision at Joppa could not have taught its lesson. The sentiment which makes all life easy is the only one which

lifts us upon the serene plane where move the saints of God in equal and perfect love to all their brethren. This, come however it may, is yet possible to all of us. By His influence or our own efforts, into the love of God we all can enter. His nature is august, to command, it is pure, to charm, it is tender, to win our hearts. His grace is potent, to inspire us for every obligation. To one who by meditation, by prayer, by duty, has attained to a true personal love to God, the things of a temporal world, be they grateful to our tastes or repugnant, be they trying or easy, are indifferent. He has risen above them; and this love will make so lovely everything that bears the likeness of the Divine One that no externals, physical, mental, or moral; no rudeness, poverty, or shiftlessness; no vice, sordidness, cruelty, ingratitude, hypocrisy: no shallowness, coldness, vulgarity, conceit,—in such presence I scarcely dare speak of deficient culture, awkwardness, roughness, and ill manners, still less of divergent views and opposing tastes, and least of all those inscrutable repulsions,—none of these trivialities can blind the heart's eye to the deep glow of MANHOOD'S intrinsic lustre, struck as a spark from the substance of His nature in whom our spirits find their life, their joy, their for all things sufficient preparation, compensation, and reward.









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Minister of the Church of our Father, Buffalo, N.Y.

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## THE CURE FOR CARE.

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“Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.”—  
I PETER v. 7.

THE temperament of Simon Peter makes his exhortation the more valuable. If he had been a stoic,—cold, brave, and calculating,—his exhortation in this text might have been charged to natural causes. They are indeed happy whose natural endowments constitute the ground of their moral strength; but this happiness is largely self-centred, and not to be shared by weaker men. But there is a relative as well as a personal interest attaching to the strong words which are uttered out of the midst of temptations overcome, weaknesses reinforced; and by how much the new experience is in contrast with that which might be expected of such an one, by so much is the exhortation to a like experience a guarantee of hope and comfort. We prize the banners carried upon the parade; but we prize more those which have been held by brave hearts against great odds, and brought out of the struggle where they risked capture and disgrace.

Simon Peter was no easy-going disciple, without care. His was not a cautious or calculating nature, secure against mistake. His mistakes had been many; and he had been betrayed, by a too confident impulse, into situations he had not had the moral force to sustain. The story of his attempt to walk upon the sea, what-

ever it may be worth as history, is certainly a character study. When, therefore, this man, now completely converted, proceeds (as his Master had directed he should) "to strengthen his brethren," we measure his victory gained over himself first, and see what large chances there were against him. The home government of his own nature had not been loyal to his best impulses: these impulses were not under supreme control. When, therefore, from the day of his brave Pentecostal sermon, we watch his course through the phases of work and influence in the Early Church, we recognize a man so far the master of a very imperfect set of forces that we are glad to hear what he has to say concerning moral triumphs. His word, then, concerning "The Cure of Care" is a word to be trusted. He that had been so anxious in many unworthy ways and betrayed by his anxieties into great trouble—"going out to weep" under cover of the darkness—comes to his fellow-disciples, and to us, saying of God, who was his "very present help in trouble," "Cast all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."

No message could any man bring more worth the heeding. For our care is the only thing we can cast on God, when we cast it from ourselves. We cannot commit our work to God except, in the act of thus committing it to God, we get a firmer two-handed grip on it ourselves. "To every man his work!" is a precept based in nature and in human accountability to God. We cannot cast on God our work in the world, however heavy for us, or however little, it may seem. We need never cease to pray, but also "we must work the works of Him that hath sent us while it is called day." If any divine help is to reach us, it must be brought to

us at work. We cannot drop our tasks and go in quest of religious indulgence. To resort again to that picture in the Gospels, it was while the disciples were toiling in rowing that a gracious presence came silently to them across the sea and through the storm. And I am persuaded that they reached the shore presently more by virtue of brave hearts and strong arms than by dint of any miracle. No: our work cannot be cast from us on God. At most we may stand like the peasants in Millet's picture, taking the hands from the implements of their humble labor only to rest a moment and bow their heads, while the angelus rings out over the fields of toil.

Nor can we be rid of our temptations by any transfer such as is here spoken of our care. Many temptations we considered cast from us, but not on God. They are no more to be His than ours. Many suggestions of evil, impure thoughts, unworthy motives, unhappy memories, can be best resisted by being ignored, treated with contumely, literally cast out of the chambers of our minds, denied hospitality in souls engaged for better visitants. But for the rest — life-long foes, besetments which are ours by heritage, temptations which float on the tides, which "visit our sad hearts," which make discords upon our nerves all unstrung, that live in the house with us or meet us in our daily business — there is nought for such as these but resistance to the death. While we resist, we may remember "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Now, then, the way of escape comes with the temptation, not away from it; and to bear life's discipline is more noble

than to avoid it. We cannot cast our temptations nor the pressure of life at times of crisis on God in any ignoble way, or substitute luxury for victory, or lassitude for strength, or idleness for work.

But Simon Peter's exhortation smites a point where we are most of us vulnerable. Who does not know the corroding care which wears away our strength as no work ever does, and frets like a moth the garment of beauty we would wrap about our daily life? More discriminating than usual is this disciple of the Prince of Peace in his choice of words: he uses here for "cares" that Greek word which the Lord of the Quiet Spirit used when he spoke of certain in whose hearts no good seed could be fruitful because "the cares of this age choked the word." He means by "care" here strangling anxieties,—solicitude, not benign and peaceful, whilst earnest and loving, but solicitude which eats into the soul like an acid, and robs our days of strength and our nights of rest; that keeps the eyes open, not with the wakeful vigilance of prudence and courage, but with the timid, restless, turning hither and thither of apprehension. This is what the writer of this letter to the church means by *μέριμνα*, "care." Note another distinction. When he wishes to speak of God in this same sentence, saying, "He careth for you," he does not use this word, but a more quiet one. He says, He careth,—as a great provider might win the name of a Providence for those who are his care. There is no restlessness of uncertainty in the idea as attached to the care of God. The Greek word here is a quiet word,—and a strong word,—such as we mean when we say of one whom we trust, "He can take care of the child."

Here is a genuine contrast between that great depth which is below all and the disturbed tossing of the surface of life. "Quietness and assurance forever," like that of God, invites us to cast our cares into its depth. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" This, then, is the significance of the exhortation to change anxiety for peace, and, since God is so strong and wise and "very present," "to cast our care on Him." Since "He cares for us," to let Him care also for our cares.

Consider, then, how reasonable is this precept: it is as reasonable as it is difficult to obey,—difficult, because love creates cares which weakness cannot carry. Our anxieties are produced by the best part of our nature often. If we were superficial, we would know nothing of care. It is the very earnestness and depth of feeling that fills us with solitudes. A strong current in a narrow channel is certain to fret its banks. Also, if we were utterly selfish, we would not know these disturbing cares; for it is not for ourselves, but for others, that they are felt. Thus is the difficulty complicated, that our anxieties are the children of our love, and draw their life from earnest souls.

But, notwithstanding, the reasonableness of the exhortation remains. For nothing dims the eye of love or makes its hand more unsteady in its inevitable tasks than these same cares. Life goes into them that we need for better uses. If the soil is rich, it will produce weeds as well as the fruit expected from it; but no soil is rich enough to afford both weeds and fruit, and the life which belongs to the useful growth is ill bestowed upon its unworthy and hindering sharer of the soil. We cannot prevent weeds coming up among



our vines, but we do prevent their growth. We cast them out as utterly bad. We cannot cast out our cares as utterly bad; but we can cast them on God, as utterly bad for us to carry.

So that, if we were simply intent upon economizing life-force for noble uses, it would be the part of wisdom for us to find some cure for care. We mourn at the sight of a young strong nature sapped by dissipation, its strength cast away upon unworthy excitements, spending itself in surface currents, which fret away the rich soil of a noble nature. Thus we mourn, in a word, that fever has taken the place of strength, and the delirium of wild life has made impossible the sober thinking which grave destinies demand. Is not the case something similar when, instead of the dissipation of unworthy pleasures, we substitute the fever of unwholesome anxieties? Do not these absorb the force we need for the very tasks before which love stands alarmed? Shall our eyes be dim with tears when their clearest vision is needed to lead aright our own lives and others by ways that are safe to ends that are blessed? Before we reach the heights of religious trust, a lower philosophy cautions us to dismiss, as far as may be, all hindering, entangling anxieties, that we may be at our best, whose best seems all inadequate for that great work,—the building up of life that may shelter other lives.

But this is not enough. I doubt whether this can be accomplished without the sacrifice of better parts of our nature. Such a persistent ignoring of care from prudential motives carries a little of the soil with each unfruitful growth which we uproot. Love that grows calculating loses spontaneity, and drags its feet when it

goes upon its errands. Stoicism may lose in sympathetic power what it gains in courage and steadiness. For the whole man to be at command, we must find subjects of reverence which shall draw us upward like sun and air, as well as objects of service in which our lives may strike their roots and grow. Behold, then, that more excellent way, in which the self-confident may become confident with no risk of selfishness. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." The result of such a projecting of our anxieties beyond ourselves will be as far removed from carelessness as it will be free from fever.

This is the law of growth,—to rid ourselves, indeed, of those things that cling about us, but also to commit ourselves to the hand of the Husbandman, who will prune away dead wood and foster every sign of fruit. "I am the vine, ye are the branches," said Jesus; but he added, "The Father is the Husbandman." We sometimes wonder that Jesus was so calm, clear of vision, direct in his thinking, sure of moral issues; for we know what depth of feeling was his, how free from superficiality, how moved by woes not his own. If we would find the secret of this calm, deep soul, we must find the path which led to the wilderness of the temptation where he girded up his strength anew. We must seek the path into the mountain stillness, where he knew so well he could find it in the night, and remaining on that height of spiritual vision all through the hours of darkness. Many a page of his sublime experience is open to us: many a page we can imagine by help of the pages we already know. Part of his secret of abiding trust he has discovered to us: part we must discover for ourselves. But one outcome marks

it all. All that intruded itself between him and his work, encumbering his love until it was not free to spend itself unhindered,—all this he cast on God; going to school like a little child in God's kingdom, learning lessons of lily and sparrow and beast of the field, glad that the birds of the air had their nests, and straightway arguing that, if "the Son of Man had not where to lay his head," he still had where to cast his care, and stand forth the freest spirit of all that burdened time, saying, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed!"

One word must not be omitted. Let no one construe this exhortation to "cast all care on Him who careth for you" as a plea for that nerveless spiritual indolence which loads up the altars of devotion with obligations of our own, just and natural for us to bear, in order that the soul may indulge itself in exemption from its more serious duties. There is many a stirring appeal to such as these to rouse them from a lethargy unspiritual and degrading. For such there is no word of comfort to make them more comfortable. But for those who are laden with heavy burdens, who stand in presence of threatening dangers, trembling as their sun goes down and the lengthening shadows tell of coming night, who are full of apprehensions which cannot add to their prudence, or of distrust which weakens their grasp on the eternal verities, and hinders them in their prayers,—for these the word of this disciple who had seen the Lord is sent, to be at once an experience and a hope. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you!"

It is the assurance to us that, though we may have been overthrown by the sudden rush of a troop of

troubles, we will find a way to rise. "God is able to make him stand," said another apostle of one who had but just recovered his feet.

There are not battalions enough yet recruited for the army of sorrow to permanently hold a faithful soul down to the dust. The "rush" passes over him, and he pulls himself together again and readjusts his strength, he regulates his courage in that interval.

Or, when the slower moving care surrounds him like a night that slowly descends upon his path, he waits until the day shall dawn. He knows "it is always morning somewhere in the world." And, when his new day arises, he will sing some song of the heart enlightened from the Source of the Day-spring. Perhaps it will be like this :—

"Dear Lord, since Thou didst make the earth,  
Thou mad'st it not for grief, but mirth :  
Therefore will I be glad,  
And let who will be sad.

"For, if I load my life with care,  
What profits me the buxom air,  
And what the sweet bird's choir,  
Or heaven's azure fire ?

"Lord, as 'tis Thine eternal state  
With joy undimmed to contemplate  
The world that Thou hast wrought  
As mirror for Thy thought,

"So every morning I will rise  
And offer Thee for sacrifice  
A spirit bright and clear  
As the wide atmosphere.

"For, Lord, since all is well with Thee,  
It cannot well be ill with me."



THE  
WEEKLY EXCHANGE

A SERIES OF SERMONS

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP  
THOMAS R. SLICER

JOSEPH MAY  
THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

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LOT'S WIFE

BY

THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

Minister of All Souls Church, New York

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SERIES II

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## LOT'S WIFE.

“Remember Lot's wife.”—LUKE xvii. 32.

THROUGH storm and fire the family of Lot were being led forth by the hand of God from the burning cities of the plain. Lot's wife turned to look back, and became a pillar of salt,—an object still pointed out to travellers on the shores of the Dead Sea. It is one of those delightful legends that are found among the folklore of all nations. The fable is characteristic of the race from which it sprung. For the fathers of the Hebrew people were the wandering tribes of the desert. Their temple was the enlargement of a tent and camp, and in the East a pilgrimage is to this day a favorite expression of piety.

The legends of the patriarchal age of Abraham, of Lot, of Jacob, of Esau, kept alive in the minds of people the memory of their ancient migrations. These legends had also a moral significance. The great migration of Israel had been in times of spiritual illumination and prophetic power. Abraham and Moses, Jeremiah, the prophets of the captivity, and the sons of the Maccabees were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” The religion of the people was in its essence not local. They were sons of Abraham before they were citizens of Zion. The prophets who most fully expressed their national ideas had always said, “Though Jerusalem



perish, though the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, yet none the less God is the shepherd of his people." In the religious poetry of the nation the figures of movement and progress, of flight and desert-journeyings, are common ones.

The spiritual Israel always worshipped, like Father Jacob "leaning on the top of his staff," ever ready to resume its march, pausing, but not arrested in its onward course. Once a year the whole nation, staff in hand and with loins girded as for a journey, eat a hasty paschal meal, which solemnly consecrated the whole "peculiar people" as the holy wanderers of history.

In the light of these conceptions we are ready to see Christ's intent in this brief warning against the mysterious sin of Lot's wife,—a sin of which one element is recorded, that she "looked back." It was as if he had said: "A time of change and destruction is near: much that you hold dear and sacred is about to perish. Such changes have often come before, in our fathers' times. Remember that the true servant of God will set his face forward. They who cling to the old, will be unable to escape from the wrath that is sure to come."

This warning was needed. Jesus rightly interpreted the signs of the times, for a spiritual as well as a political crisis was at hand. They who should attach themselves to his cause must be held back by no private or local ties. Spiritual religion must take on once more something of its ancient migratory habits. The disciples must go out into all the world. The old order was doomed.

As in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, an ancient civilization was being destroyed in its sins, and in the

hands of a faithful few, who escaped its evil tendencies, the promise of the future lay. No time now for regretful conservatism and sentimental tarrying! The servants of the living God were called to go forward, and no man who should put his hand to the plough and look back was fit for the kingdom of God.

Did time permit, we would gladly consider the large problem of what should be the true adjustment in the religious life between tradition and living principles, between the faith our fathers taught and that by which our children shall be guided. I beg you to notice how, in the very language of my text, the most radical utterances of Christ's new gospel were illustrated by examples which appealed to a holy past. In proclaiming a new righteousness greater than that of Moses, a new wisdom better than Solomon's, he allied Himself with the eternal spirit which runs through all the ages, which existed before Abraham was, and shall endure when the Scriptures and temple have passed away. Perhaps our distinction between the conservative and the iconoclast will similarly pass away in the religion of the future. The spiritually enlightened man can employ the past and the present as mutually explanatory. He accepts the moral of every aged fable. He feels the glowing heart of faith under the cumbrous apparel of myth and creed. He can say to such superstitious idolaters of the ancient tradition, "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

But it is not to so large and impersonal a theme that I direct your thoughts. On this last Sunday of the year we may remember the sin of Lot's wife, as illustrating not the principle in the Church at large, but a danger in our own lives. Perhaps the smaller theme

is the true key to the larger. The end of the year is naturally our season of remembrance. One truth stands out at this time singularly plain,—that each man's memories are exclusively his own. We gather together in such an assembly as this, in recognition of needs, desires, and prayers which belong to our common humanity, and of one divine life which surrounds and sustains us all. Yet I seem to see each one of you attended by lights and shadows from your separated past, each one entrenched, as in a fortress, among the unshared memories and the by-gone experiences which are inalienably your own. By the fate of Lot's wife—as interpreted by Jesus—we are reminded that there is a backward look which is fatal to progress and to light. This one sinful act of Lot's wife emerges out of the dreamland of that prehistoric day, and its spiritual quality stands out as a warning against the same sin in every generation.

It may seem strange that in such an irresponsible and almost mechanical faculty as memory there should be moral danger. But, if you look below the surface, you see that memory is no automatic recorder, no photographic plate impartially registering every object presented. Every year and every day a thousand experiences are forgotten. Life and time are as a sea from whose flowing tides certain objects are cast upon the shores of memory and preserved; others, sinking in shoreless depths, are lost in oblivion. "How strange that I forget," you say; but no, the strange thing is that you remember!

It is the seal and witness of your individual being. Far from being a passive faculty, memory moves according to the deepest activities of the soul, not as

yielding wax receiving impressions on it, but as a most active power. The things men remember are such as become constructive forces in character. The scholar never forgets the great books which shaped the belief or fired the enthusiasm of his youth. No one of you ever forgets the persons who have touched your heart, who have influenced your character and shaped your opinions. Hence the recollections of childhood are so vivid. For in that plastic time a word spoken in jest, a chance companionship, may become the source of the most momentous tendencies in after life. Many of the eccentricities of memory are explained by the fact that in this spiritual treasure-house events are ranked in the order of their moral significance. The man who will remember every trifle in connection with his business — *i.e.*, of his main duty in life — will forget entirely the last book he read. The jeweller remembers everybody's diamonds, the statistician has a brain filled with figures, and the minister has ever a text on the end of his tongue. The retentiveness of memory corresponds with the sphere of one's interest, and enlarges as that does. Hence it is that to forget a duty only adds to the disgrace of not performing it; while to forget an injury proves a truly benevolent mind. Whatever stirs the conscience is remembered. When the soul and heart are quickened, then the passing event becomes indelible.

The record of the life of Jesus is full of such incidents. Hence it is so fragmentary, hence so impressive. Great gaps are left in the story. Events that would fill chapters of an ordinary history are passed over in silence. But the smallest fact is recorded, if it chance to strike deep root in some listening and watch-

ful soul. How touching is that solemn record of this outwardly insignificant event!—“The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.” That brief glance of sorrow rescued an apostle from a traitor’s final shame. No doubt Peter himself contributed this to the Gospel, as a great and necessary fact in any true record of his Master’s life. Does not your own memory hold among its treasures or its terrors some brief look or word, some trifle light as air, which has a place in the “sacred history of the soul”? Our memories are gloriously moral, and have no regard for dignities. An idle word which wounded a friend, may be written larger there, than all the distinguished efforts of an eloquent pen. The man of the world forgets easily the many brilliant assemblies he has adorned, and the long round of elegant pleasures in which he has participated; but how vivid the reminiscence of some unknown and private day, when honor received a wound, or some disgraceful temptation was finally embraced! People in whom there is no principle of progress have memories like those ancient and deserted lands, where all the king’s palaces are in ruins, and only the sepulchres are preserved. The shapes of memory are spun from the same thread of which the tissue of character is woven. There are no accidents here. Like drifts to like. And, as the soul moves through life, such thoughts and memories as are of its own kind are attached to it and become a part of its substance. It is a personal matter. As a man remembereth, so is he. Our backward look upon the past—like that of Lot’s wife—is no accident of the moment, but the outcome of our character. In the light of this spiritual law, that what we remember depends upon what we are, we see that

the season of remembrance is also our day of judgment ; that the faculty of memory is the angel of judgment in our hearts. The past is inseparable from the present experience ; and in the backward look we become conscious of our moral identity, sometimes with a vividness which the passing experience itself never gives. Hence the danger and the service of the day of remembrance.

This old year that now lies behind us may be a chain to bind or an inspiration to urge us on. Let us try to distinguish between the good and evil in this matter. First, there is the "dead past." There are those experiences in our lives which never had in them any principle of permanence or growth. Do not struggle to carry with you the burden of a dead past, — its trifles, follies, wasted hours, mistaken purposes, and fruitless pleasures. Who has not looked back, like Lot's wife, upon such scenes of destruction ? Who has not missed the onward path in such vain lingering looks upon things that ought to have perished ?

But, besides a dead past, there is that sinful past which brings death with it. Can you look back upon your life, without seeing some records there that flash with warning or flow with humiliation and tears ? It is here that the dead past weighs heavier than a mill-stone round the necks of those unhappy ones who try to bear it with them through the painful years. It must not be attempted. "Let the dead past bury its dead." Remember, by all means, your sinfulness, but forget the sinful deed. Treasure the warning, but beware how you review in fancy the painful scenes by which your conscience was instructed. The evil of the confessional, and of much morbid self-reproach, is that it

dwells too much with the gross accident and transitory form of the sin, not enough in the needs of the soul which the sin reveals. Fly from the burning Sodom of by-gone sin. Rejoice that you have left it burning behind you, but do not look at it. Turn your face toward the promised land, and recognize God's mercy in your escape. Of all sins known to man there is only one mortal, and that is the clinging to an evil past. The heritage of Mother Eve (she who, half-beguiling, half-beguiled, first placed on human lips the mortal taste of disobedience) may be forgiven and made clean. To disobey because evil was tempting and deceitful, that was terrible, indeed; but to keep on sinning when the illusion has departed and the serpent glitters no longer, to turn once more to what is seen to be perishable, to refuse to go on when the Heavenly Voice has called us forward,—what sinning so terrible as that? There is a feeble spirit in us all, which clings to a lower life because it is easier and accustomed, which disobeys not from passion or ignorance, but from mere lack of faith in God's promised land before us. Let that spirit remember Lot's wife, for it is a partner of her sin. That pillar of salt is, indeed, as the Book of Wisdom says, "The monument of an unbelieving soul."

But above all this there is a living past, too. It contained those events and deeds in which the living principles were shown by which, now and always, we would be guided. "Forgetting the things behind" is by no means the last word of the religious ideal. Our life is a progress: we need the memories of the past to show the lines of direction in which we should go. On the day of remembrance we should try to see the sweep

of the curve on which our lives are moving. God was in that past of yours. He was in it, and therefore it has a meaning and value for your spiritual nurture. The lives of many of you are fragmentary. The old years and the new have no bond between them. Like Lot's wife, you know not how to bind the fresh experience with what has gone before. Your past and present are in conflict: your backward look is at the expense of present power; and so there is no unity, no continuity, in your life. There is such fragmentariness about every life, to a degree. Try to see your past not as dead, but as the material from which the "living present," is to grow. Things of the old year, in which you saw no significance at the time, were training you for the New Year's chosen task. The dreadful mistake was God's warning beacon which is to guide you now. The blinding sorrow was leading you to the deeper secrets of love, and the holier light of faith, in which you stand to-day. The day when you woke from delusion, and perceived the larger truth and blessing that was near,—its memory remains a witness in your heart of the possibilities of heavenly renewal.

The sin of Lot's wife was not in memory as such, but in letting the thoughts of things gone by, stop the onward course to better things. In one sense it is not possible or desirable to forget anything, be it good or evil, that deeply influenced your character. The records of the past are part of our personal identity. We are not permitted to forget anything until we have learned the lesson it had to give. The service of the past is to be an inspiration to the present. Such has always been the religious method of employing the memories of the soul. In some form or other it uses



confession as a prelude to peace. "Whoso confesseth and believeth, the same shall be saved." Religion always joins the memories of the past, however sad or shameful, with the highest faith in the renewing power of the spirit. Paul never forgets that he was a persecutor of Jesus. Peter's memory of his denial adds to his fiery zeal a solemn and steadfast gratitude, which holds him to his apostolic mission with a constancy foreign to his nature. Should you suggest to one of these self-recording souls that perhaps it was not to blame for that old mistake, it would look at you, not with gratitude, but with grieved protestation. The old evil life is the distant land-mark, from which the progress of the soul's journey is estimated. Take away its ownership in that past, and the soul loses its bearings and cannot tell whence it came or whither it goes. The instinct of sorrow for the past, the profound sense of guilt which all men know at times, is a recognition of the profound fact that a law of cause and effect operates inevitably in character. We read in the sins of yesterday something of our sinning capacity for to-day, and should strive not to obliterate this sense of guilt, but convert it into a spiritually propelling power. Hence Christ's method of removing from a tempted soul the poison of its past, is to put into a man a new principle of spiritual growth, that the old encumbrances shall fall from him, as in spring-time the dead oak-leaves are thrust from the branches where they cling, by the outward expansion of life and beauty within. Christ imparts to sinful men the knowledge of a new love and better order of life, which conquers the evil inclinations and habits; and he who has once tasted of this victory may go on conquering and to

conquer. For him to whom the prayer "Deliver us from evil" has been once answered, the memory of evil has lost its terror. He who has learned the love of goodness can say to the returning violence of his old temptations, "It is no longer I, but sin that dwelleth in me."

The day of remembrance should bring with it two signal benefits. First, it reveals the past as a constructive power in character, as a spiritually propelling force. Second, it gives unity to our otherwise discouraged lives. But there is another helpful illustration in the figure of Lot's wife. Her companions were from the same city as she, but the same memory which urged them onward, held her fatally back. Are there not these two classes of people among us? Are there not these conflicting tendencies in our hearts? Do we not find that, viewed in the religious spirit, our experience is a treasury of living principles, which are ever with us? Is there not also a misuse of memory which clings to the mere forms in which the spirit flows, and sees not that the same beneficent power which was in the vanished joy,

"Still floats upon the morning wind,  
Still whispers to the willing mind.

Our past must be left behind us as a form, taken with us as a principle. How many souls are paralyzed by the backward look! How many to whom every lesson that life brings, every mistake, every blessing, every loss, is a new source of power; and who draw from the deep wells of their experience the water of life for many!

As we stand here between the old year and the new,

let us resolve to carry forward all that is strong and vital. May the day of remembrance be to us all, not the looking back of Lot's wife, a time of unavailing dejection and of spiritual danger, but a restful pause, in which the pilgrim may trim his lamp and gird his loins anew! The ceaseless rush of passing opportunity, each day bringing its own claims and cares, would dissolve our lives into a flood of changing dreams. We should be creatures of circumstance, did we not sometimes collect our scattered experiences and "gather up the fragments that remain." Your experiences as they pass are often too passionately exciting to reveal their meaning and reality. Only when they have been viewed from a distance, in the silent landscape of the past, do they show their true harmony and outline. A great sorrow, when it descends upon our heads, is too near to be known. It is the cloud which has come too near the earth, and simply chills and darkens, with its blinding mist, the house on which it rests. But, by and by, the cloud of sorrow lifts, into the calm atmosphere of the past, and then sends down a fruit-giving rain upon some dry and thirsty ground; or reflects upon us, it may be, the light of heaven in nobler and more varied colors than the cloudless sky could show. In God's sight the old year needs a new to make it perfect. And only in the light of the old year shall we see our way through what the new one has in store. As we are made mindful of the changes of the time, let us hold fast to the eternal things. May the Father in his love, enriching, fructifying every experience, lead us into the large life with Him, which is an eternal one! The perishable shapes in which the web of life is woven, these, after all, are not the reality of our lives.

The ever-succeeding days and years are as the strokes of time's great bell calling us to prayers of thanksgiving. May every experience be a new door unto the temple of God, through which we enter the divine fulness of grace! May the past grow rich with meaning and inspiration, and the future bright with hope and glory, until the old heaven and earth shall pass away, and God shall be all in all!

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THE CONCEALMENT OF GOD

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP

Minister of the Unitarian Congregational Church, Syracuse, N.Y.

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SERIES II

JANUARY 1, 1893

No. 9

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## THE CONCEALMENT OF GOD.

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“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.”—PROV. xxv. 2.

THE full verse runs thus: “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: it is the honor of kings to search out a matter.” That is, there are two glories,—one God’s, the other man’s,—the glory of God consisting in concealment, the glory of man in discovery. If this be so, assuredly man’s peculiar glory as discoverer can in no way be better illustrated than in searching out the method of and the reasons for the concealment of God.

I. First, we may say that God conceals himself in Nature. All nations have felt the presence of this smiling Mystery which we call Nature, and have more or less dimly understood that there was something concealed behind it. The Egyptians expressed this thought by the veiled figure of Isis, whose veil no mortal hand might lift, or by the weird Sphinx, whose calm eyes look over the vast stretches of sand, beholding something man’s eye can never see, and whose half-parted lips smile with the sense of some great undiscovered secret.

The Hebrew Scriptures are full of this thought: “Clouds and darkness are round about him”; “Truly, thou art a God that hidest thyself”; or, as here, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.”

In nature God recedes as you strive to search him out,—recedes, not into distance, but deeper and



deeper into the very heart and core of things, — recedes as the atmosphere does, when you strive to grasp it. Though your fingers are empty, clutch as you may, the air is still around your hand. Its subtle nature has escaped the coarse material grasp. Indeed, it seems sometimes as if this world of ours were deliberately contrived in such a fashion that no one need believe in God unless he pleases. Certainly, no one need believe in truth unless he pleases. I have heard of men who believed in lies, believed that there was no such thing as truth in the world. Certainly, no one need believe in right unless he pleases. I have heard of men who laughed at the very idea of there being any awful Right which all men are bound to obey, who despised those as hypocrites who held up the law of right. No one need believe in purity unless he pleases. You need not go very far to find men who will sneer at the very thought of purity in man or woman. No one need believe in love unless he pleases. Many men believe in hate, and how many know that love is omnipotent?

I see no provision made in sky or earth for convincing the self-satisfied sceptic. The stately world of God rolls on, and all the thousand ministrations of blessing go on though he have no eye to see them, no ear to hear them, no heart to acknowledge them. The Hand that blesses refuses to quit its concealment for the poor purpose of making fools behold and confess.

If the wheels of the world ground on mechanically, making a great deal of noise and dust in the grinding, then dull men would be forced to see that there must

be a Power to work the machine. It is the perfect equipoise, the silent perfection of the adaptations of nature which makes the dull man's difficulty. If the changes of the seasons were brought about by some gigantic lever that hoisted the world's axis up and down with starts and jolts from time to time, or if the earth was turned in its daily revolution by some stupendous crank that stunned the ears of men with its steely jar, how would fools stand aghast with amazement who now gaze stupidly, with no emotion whatever, on the mighty planet floating through the starry spaces as noiselessly as the thistledown floats upon the breeze! Think of it! The world has no foundation-stones. No bars of steel clamp the planet to her place. No props of adamant are needed to keep her from falling. Poised in free space she moves. As light as mote in sunbeam or bird in air, the huge earth-ship floats through the ether, how silently! Even when Evening puts her quiet finger on the lips of men, and no leaf stirs in a million trees, you cannot catch one faintest sound made by the mighty ship of the skies, no ripple dashing in music on her prow, no murmur of waters underneath her keel. God is calm. His mightiest works move silent on their way. The silent strength of the Maker is in them, is sufficient for them. Is it not strange that it is the very perfection of His work that blinds the eyes of common men to its mystery and its wonder?

Robert Houdin, the celebrated French conjurer and mechanic, once made a wonderful automaton figure of a man, which would answer in writing any question

you chose to put to it. "I had taken the greatest pains," he writes in his "Autobiography," "with the mechanism of my automaton, and had set great store on making the clockwork noiseless. In this I wished to imitate nature, whose complicated instruments act so imperceptibly. Will it be believed," he adds, "that this very perfection, which I had striven so hard to attain, acted unfavorably to the reception of my automaton? I constantly heard people say: 'Very ingenious, but probably very simple. It often requires a very slight thing to produce seemingly great results.' I then actually made the machinery a little less perfect, so that a whizzing sound could be heard, something like cotton-spinning. Then the worthy public formed a very different estimate of my work, and the admiration increased in ratio of the intensity of the noise. Such expressions as this were now in order: 'What talent, what ingenuity, such a wonderful combination must require!' To please my public, I had injured my machine. I was ashamed of myself, and restored it to its original perfection."

God never injures his perfect mechanism to win the applause of the foolish. "In unbroken silence," says the wise man, "the old Bounty goes forward, uttering no word of explanation." Fools are free to suppose that they manufacture all their blessings for themselves, if they so please. The Royal Giver disdains to plead for thanks, nor withholds the gift because thanks are wanting. "He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the just and the unjust" alike. "He is kind to the

unthankful and the evil." The only gift that God cannot give to the unthankful man is a thankful heart, for this is the one gift the unthankful man deliberately refuses to receive.

There are certain parts of the providence of God that would seem palpable to the commonest minds. The grateful sense of the cool stream that a thirsty dog displays; the joyous cry of the bird when, laden with food, it comes back to its nest and its young; the pleasure of every young thing in the spring-time, — all these the commonest eye can see.

But whoso would feel a deeper and more interior thankfulness must draw, even in the ordinary succession of nature, far more delicate lines than these. It takes a still eye and a quiet heart to catch and interpret the evanescent tints of the sunset, whereby God writes his last "Good-night!" to his earthly children. It takes a very delicate ear to know "what the waves are always saying," what the wind whispers to the leaves, and what the rustling leaves reply. Only the childlike poet-heart can quite understand all these things.

But, surely, all of us can follow the sweet singers of Israel as far as this: "Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." "Thou waterest the earth, and blessest it; thou makest it soft with showers." "Who made great lights, for his mercy endureth forever; the sun to rule the day, for his mercy endureth forever; the moon and the stars to govern the night, for his mercy endureth forever." "Praise God," said the good Saint Fran-

cis,—“praise God for our brother, the sun, for our sister, the moon!” “Young men and maidens, old men and children,” can all praise Him “who giveth food to all flesh; for his mercy endureth forever.”

If we now proceed to ask, “Where is God concealed in things?” the answer is, “Inside the things.” “You should look for a woodman’s bullet *inside* the gourd,” said Hawkeye to the Indians who were vainly searching all around the gourd. They looked, and found the bullet-hole inside, in the exact centre. Keep on looking inside the things; and, if you look steadfastly enough, keenly enough, you will discover God inside of each thing. Search for the Maker of the stars inside the stars; search for his omnipresence inside of all space. “The strength of the hills is his.” Search, then, inside of the hills for the Force that makes them stand fast. “Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the mighty waters.” Search the waters, then. Analyze them. Reduce them to oxygen and hydrogen. Then search inside oxygen, inside hydrogen, to find his way. Then, at last, you come upon a Force that existed before the galaxy was, which was with God or ever the morning stars sang together. This is the way science is at last seeking for him, and is fast finding him. Soon Science and Religion will together sing one song: “All is of God.” “There is none other but he.” “For of him and to him and through him are all things.”

If now we ask, “*How* is this concealment effected?” the answer is, “By the limitations of the senses.” The eye can only perceive the light that emanates from material objects, for this alone causes

the optic nerve to vibrate and to convey sensations to the brain. All else is to it but empty space. The eye cannot see Force: it only sees some of the results of Force. We do not even see each other: we only see the changing bodies through which we, the invisible ones, act on the world.

This material eye of ours goes straight through the solid universe to single out the objects akin to it, which are on its own material plane. From here to the Milky Way, what vast abysses filled with God, filled with glorious life, therefore, life unimaginably grand and free! But our eye gives never a sign of recognition save for its own. It sees only those starry palaces of seclusion whose shining turrets glisten upon us from afar. It does this, and this only, because eye and star are made of the same stuff.

The method of this concealment suggests the reason of it. It is in simple justice to man's mortality that God has "shut down the doorways of his head," so that he sees as through a glass darkly. The glory that shines through the universe, if it did not destroy man's body as he gazed, would utterly distract his attention from the needful work of earth. He would feel so belittled by his amazing surroundings that human life would have no interest to him, and its all-important life-lessons would never be learned. As it is, we see just enough to suggest the wonders behind what we see, and no more. If the starlight that shines upon my whole body in a winter night were concentrated upon the pupil of my eye, it would dazzle me to blindness. I cannot bear more light than is sent through a little circular window one-

fifteenth of an inch in diameter. The mere material light around me has to be fenced off from every other part of my body, that I may be able to bear it. If this be true of the material things that are so closely akin to my body and its senses, what would it be if all God's glory should suddenly burst upon my gaze? The forming bud is protected by a soft sheath from excess of light. It is plain, then, that, if in our present stage of existence we were visibly confronted with the full majesty of Being, our spontaneous life would be crushed. We would not dare to act freely and be ourselves. We ignorantly complain of the commonplace of every-day life, not knowing that the secret that the angels desire to look into is this,—how in the midst of the very blaze of the omnipresent God a little homelike, commonplace life like ours can be possible. As we move about upon our common household and business cares, we are, happily, unconscious that the place on which we stand is holy ground, made holy by the presence of the Eternal. Let us learn to say of this very commonplace, that sometimes presses upon us so sorely, what Milton said of his blindness,—

“This darkness is the shadow of Thy wing.”

\* This World I deem  
 But a beautiful dream  
 Of shadows that are not what they seem,  
 Where Visions rise,  
 Giving dim surmise  
 Of that which shall meet our waking eyes.

\* By Thomas Whytehead, late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge,—a beautiful spirit. *Requiescit in Dei pace.* I have altered but one word.—S. R. C.

Arm of the Lord,  
 Creating Word,  
 Whose Glory the silent skies record,  
 Where stands Thy Name  
 In scrolls of flame  
 'Neath the firmament's high shadowing frame?

I gaze o'erhead,  
 Where Thy hand hath spread  
 For the waters of heaven their crystal bed,  
 And stored the dew  
 In its deeps of blue,  
 Which the fires of the sun come tempered through.

Soft they shine  
 Through that pure shrine,  
 As beneath the veil of Christ's flesh divine  
 Shines forth the Light  
 That were else too bright  
 For the feebleness of a sinner's sight.

I gaze aloof  
 On the tissued roof,  
 Where Time and Space are the warp and woof,  
 Which the King of kings  
 As a curtain flings  
 O'er the dreadfulness of eternal things,

A tapestried tent  
 To shade us meant  
 From the bare everlasting Firmament!  
 Where the glow of the skies  
 Comes soft to our eyes  
 Through a veil of mystical imagines.

But could I see,  
 As in truth they be,  
 The glories of Heaven that encompass me,  
 I should lightly hold  
 The tissued fold  
 Of that marvellous Curtain of blue and gold.



Soon the whole,  
 Like a parted scroll,  
 Shall before my amazed sight uproll;  
 And then be seen  
 In unclouded sheen  
 The Presence wherein I have ever been.

II. God conceals himself in man. First, God conceals himself in the natural joy which all young creatures feel in the mere fact of being alive. The playfulness of young animals is an unconscious testimony to their sense of the worth of that life which has come to them so freshly from the Source of Life. The joy of our little children is God's own witness to us of what he means by life. One day, long ago, I learned a lesson from my own little one of

#### WHERE BABY-JOY COMES FROM.

As I sat by my study-table,  
 With my sermon strewing the floor,  
 My little eighteen-months' darling  
 Came full sail through my study-door.

He first bore away to the window,  
 And then with the carpet he played,  
 And then washed his hands in the sunshine,  
 And laughed at the shadows they made.

It mattered not what he was doing,  
 Each thing gave a new surprise,  
 And the light of his childish gladness  
 Kept shining on out of his eyes.

As I wondered where all the joy came from,  
 The thought was borne in upon me  
 That, when God and a babe are together,  
 A little fountain of glee

Must needs bubble up in the child's heart ;  
 For the flow of its life is given  
 By the Force of the upper joy-tides  
 Of the Cheerful Heart in heaven !

I had quite forgotten my sermon,  
 And my baby upon the floor  
 Was tearing the paper to pieces  
 That was strewn from window to door.

But I knew that the thought he gave me  
 Was more than his hands could destroy,  
 For the love of the Father in heaven  
 Had come to me through my boy !

God conceals himself in a child's first earnest thoughts. Never does the divine goodness appear more adorable to me than when I consider the ways of God towards a young child. When God speaks to a child, the child-mind is lifted unaware into a realm of joy, of wonder, and of awe; but so delicately gentle, so full of reverence for the integrity and inviolability of a child's soul is the Eternal Father's spirit, that the child himself can detect nothing but the secret whisper of his own heart, the glow of his own feeling, the awe-stricken voice of his own conscience. Breathless, I listen at the door of the child's heart; but ear of mortal is not fine enough to hear the voice of God blessing his little one. The most trained spiritual sense is too weak to trace the secret of that ineffable guidance. "Here am I, for THOU didst call me," said the child Samuel to Eli; "for Samuel did not yet know the Lord." Happy is that child whose teacher has enough of divine insight to show him when and how to say, "Speak, Lord, for

thy servant heareth." Ay, and blessed is that teacher; for through him the spirit of God passes as through an open door, to reach his beloved child beyond.

Mature men and women are again and again quite unable to give the true genealogy of their best thought and feeling. We receive our Christianity from a million hands. God has so mingled himself up with humanity, and the steps of man's recognition of this have been so numberless, that it has taken ages to make even the sacred words by means of which we give utterance to our highest aspirations. In nothing is the unity of man's religious sense and the ubiquity of the divine presence with man more clearly shown than in the fact that in every civilized language there are words all ready to express the deepest thought, the highest emotion. God, duty, eternity, immortality, loving-kindness, right, truth,—such terms as these are found in every civilized tongue. God and man together, working together in most secret harmony of purpose, made these sacred words, and freighted them with such an infinite load of meaning.

A still more subtle and secret connection of God with man and of man with man is hinted at in the way sacred feelings have been passed on from heart to heart.

It is instructive to think of the way in which skill in the mechanic arts has been passed on from generation to generation. No blacksmith ever learned to shoe a horse from a book. The art of horse-shoeing has been passed on directly from person to person for thousands of years.

In a precisely similar way the most sacred feelings of mankind have been passed on by personal contact. This is the true apostolic succession. Were a single hand wanting to a single head, the sacred chain of succession would be broken. I deem it simple prosaic truth to affirm that the way Jesus felt toward God and man has been passed on from person to person, from heart to heart, for two thousand years, until the sacred feeling has reached you and me.

This is, indeed, the procession of the Holy Spirit. It is God passing from breast to breast, God using one consecrated soul to influence another, and that one another, and that other yet another, in an endless series. If any one asks himself, "Whence come these longings for the better life?" the wisest thing to say is: "All is of God. I cannot tell whence came this heavenly thought which gives me new hope and courage, which prompts me to nobler life and action, whether it came from the direct, instant touch of God upon my soul, or whether it has descended from heaven, down an angel-ladder of souls, until it has reached me at last. Perhaps both are true. Both may be always true. I therefore bless God, and in him bless all true, loyal, and tender souls in earth and heaven."

Our best and highest experience may be summed up as our becoming aware of the surrounding God. "God comes to see us without bell"; that is, there is no signal of his approach. The Blessed Life is with us. That is all we know. A moment ago we were in the hard old world, whose vulgar lessons we had coned to weariness; but now we can scarce contain

our joy, for once more the Life is manifest, that Life which was first in the Father, then in Jesus, and is now beginning to manifest itself in us. In a moment old things are passed away. All things are become new. We are now "in Christ," inside the spirit of sonship and brotherhood; and therefore the whole creation to us is new. I know how hard it is to keep this high level. Certainly, no one has yet complained that the divine purpose was too palpable, that too little was left for man to discover, that the riddle of life was guessed too easily, that too little trust was reposed in man's power of thought and will, that the Blessed Life was altogether too simple, that God had not left enough for man to do. I sometimes say that, if God were less than God, he would suffer us to feel blessed while living in conditions far short of his glory and ours, our glory in him; but, because God is God, nothing short of his own divine perfection incarnated in us will ever satisfy the longings of us, his dear children.

The mingling, then, of God's life with man's life is incomprehensibly subtle. It goes down to the very depths of man's nature.

"Draw, if thou canst, the mystic line  
Severing rightly His from thine,  
Which is Human, which Divine."

In a word, there is only one life; and God and his children live that life together. It is as hard to separate your life from God's as it is to separate a drop in mid-ocean from the rest of the ocean.

Indeed, perhaps the truest symbolic picture we can make of our own lives, lived as they are in the midst of God, is to picture ourselves as beings formed wholly of the water of that infinite spirit-ocean that fills all space, gifted, nevertheless, with the wondrous power of free motion,— motion directed from within, — and to conceive that it is that self-directed motion which eternally differentiates us from the rest of that great sea of life, from whose bosom we sprang, and in the midst of which we live and move and have our being. The Eternal surrounds us on every side as completely as the ocean surrounds the fishes that swim in its depths.

If any one says, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" I would answer, If God has not already found you to some extent, then you alone are living outside of God's world, outside of Space and Time. Not only is "your very longing of itself an answering cry," but every decent impulse, every smallest piece of self-control, every kindly affection, every straightforward piece of honesty you have got, is part of his presence with you. You have received this and that good impulse from your parents, you say; but you must learn that the good in your parents is part of the Infinite Goodness. God is not jealous of your parents. Bless them for it. Let the good seed they sowed in your heart bear fruit a hundred-fold. "All is of God."

Where does God conceal himself? Inside the man, inside of his life, his thought, his feeling, his hope, his aspiration. Inside of all men? Yes. God conceals himself inside of the bad man's soul, inside of

the best that is in it, keeping that best from utter death.

I read a story the other day about a burglar who had broken into a house, and had found no one in it, until he crept into a room where the wife was alone, watching by the cradle of a sleeping babe. When the mother saw him, she conquered her fear by a supreme effort; and, rousing all her energies for the sake of her child, she quietly beckoned to him, gave him the keys, and whispered, "Take anything you wish; but I beg of you to be quiet, as my child's life depends upon his continuing to sleep." "Then," whispered the burglar, "he shall sleep for all me"; and, giving back her keys, he slipped silently out of the house. The Eternal Goodness had not quite left that burglar's soul.

God is inside the careless nature, inside of the little bit of earnestness it still possesses; inside the talebearer, inside the little bit of reluctance and shame the talebearer still has left; inside the lying politician, setting a limit beyond which even his lying tongue will not go; inside the brutal man, setting bounds his brutality cannot pass; inside the seducer, inside the compunction he feels at the misery of his victim; inside the painted harlot's dreams of an innocent childhood. God, in a word, is inside of the hells of all lost souls, seeking to find them again.

God is inside of average people; inside the excuses we make for our own shortcomings,—the ideal which, dimly seen by us, makes those excuses necessary to our own self-respect, the ideal which, more clearly

seen in some happy hour of insight, makes those excuses appear disgusting to our awakened conscience; inside of poor performance, making that appear not only ignoble, but wearisome at last to our imagination; inside of poor weak hearts that would love the right, had they but strength to do so, holding up the beautiful image of that right, the love of which shall one day make those weak hearts strong.

God conceals himself inside of our gradually increasing insight, our slowly developing character; inside of the processes of intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth. It is the gentle, the imperceptible, the perfectly natural quality of this growth that is the hiding place of his power.

There is no sudden and tremendous change from black midnight to high noon. Inch by inch the dawn gains slowly on the dark. You can scarcely perceive any gain at all. Even when the great crisis comes, when the glorious sun glides up at last from below the eastern horizon, it has been so gently prepared for that the eye has had time to readjust itself, moment by moment, to the broadening and deepening light.

It is just as gradually that we come to our higher thought. If my present thought of the universe could have been suddenly poured in one immense flood upon my mind when I was a child, it probably would have caused insanity. The mind's eye grows slowly adjusted to the gradually increasing light. Even when some great crisis comes upon the soul, and the mighty Sun of Righteousness arises suddenly upon its awakened sense, there has been a long-continued preparation for the central event. The slowly increasing



light has slowly dissipated the darkness of the mind. Many and many a bright dawnstreak has heralded the day.

Lastly, God conceals himself in great minds: in the great inventor's mind, inside of his subtle ingenuity, his wonderful adaptation of old means to new ends; in the great scientist, inside of his patient arraying of all the facts, his sudden intuition of the key that unlocks the secret harmony that lies hidden in ten thousand seemingly discordant facts; in the mind of the great atheistic mathematician, inside of his gigantic calculations, which bring back the stars in their orbits true to time, and show the sublime safety of the solar system; inside of Columbus's thought, bidding him trust absolutely the logic of the sphere; inside the statesman's plans for the welfare of his country and the world: inside the artist's imagination, eye, and hand, giving birth through them to new forms of truth and beauty; and, highest of all, inside the poet and prophet soul, bidding it sing and prophesy of the wonder that shall be; inside the royal heart of love that dares all things for man's sake and God's.

God, then, conceals himself inside of the greatness of great souls, inside of the uplift they give to the world,—a greatness, mark it well, mingled up with their temperament, climate, circumstances, a greatness never completely and purely manifested, never able wholly to stamp out hereditary tendencies.

God conceals himself inside of Elijah's grand and stormy soul, inside of his fearless loyalty to purity and justice, inside of a man who yet can hate with

fierce and barbaric hatred those whose worship he feels to be low, mean, and sensual. God conceals himself inside of the greatness of the saints of old, inside the greatness of the saints of to-day. Time makes no difference. There has, I know, for centuries been a rooted conviction that God was nearer to his people in the early morning of time than he is to-day. Then he talked familiarly with his chosen ones. Now he has receded into distance. But it cannot be too often said that God is equally near to two souls equally open, be they far apart in space as the antipodes, as far apart in time as the first man and the last. If the saints of old were nearer to God in simplicity and purity of heart, in sacred courage, in holy love of the right and the true and the good, then, and then only, did God commune with them more nearly and immediately than with the saints to-day. What was the reason for the strange mistake? The dull Western mind for centuries has insisted on taking literally the daring Orientalisms of the Hebrew prophets, which represented God as speaking to man in the first person, as if an audible voice broke upon the prophet's ear. The sacred silence of the heavens has never been thus rudely broken. When God communes with man, then through the depths of man's soul an unutterable emotion has passed, forming itself into words, it may be, as it passes upwards and outwards through the understanding and the senses; but the words themselves are not the inspiration, can at best but hint at the inspiration. When air passes through water, it forms bubbles. The bubbles are but the clinging of the

water to the air, its ineffectual attempt to keep it as it is departing. The murmur of the waters is not the Wind. It is but a sign that the invisible element is pressing upon the waters, so that they give forth their voice.

The immature mind keeps perpetually craving for some outward sign. "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down!" is the natural cry of the indignant prophet's heart, when the world is young, and when faith is dead and love is cold, and the oppressor's might is strong. But the calm, deep heaven gives no sign. No thunderbolt has blasted the oppressor's head, no earthquake has opened to swallow up the utterers of lies. The prophet was looking in the wrong place. The commencement of God's answer was in his own indignant heart. The deepest answer God has yet given was concealed inside the infant smile of a little Baby born amid the rugged hills of Palestine. God answers man's folly by man's wisdom. God's answer to faithlessness is faith; to lies, truth; to cursing, blessing; to the force of the spirit of hate, the force of the spirit of love.

To sum up, then, God conceals himself in man by becoming man. The more completely God is concealed in a noble nature, the more absolutely from his own inner impulse the noble soul acts, the greater the triumph, the completer the incarnation, of the Divine. God within a strong warrior soul, that aches to strike down all wrong, is intensely masculine. God manifested in a serene and gracious woman's nature is all womanly. In a word, God conceals

himself in man by the intensely human aspect human truth and goodness wears.

In mankind, too, God, as it were, divides himself into innumerable fragments, and so escapes the notice of all but the wise: insight here, affection there; power here, tact there; genius here, patience there; courage here, endurance there; exactness here, breadth there.

When the sun shines on the water, his mighty ray is divided into millions on millions of glittering points reflected from millions on millions of tiny waves. It is all one light.

Why does God thus conceal himself in man? That man's may be the kingdom and the power and the glory; that our goodness may be ours, not merely his; that we may share his thought, not merely be receptive of his thought; that we may be ourselves; that each step in our spiritual progress may be taken by ourselves, by our own desire and consent.

God conceals himself in man, that man may be blessed and helped by man. If by man comes death, by man also comes the resurrection of the dead. The Eternal Father refuses to be thanked and blessed alone. To each worshipper of his sole divinity he seems to insist that that very worshipper should recognize and gratefully acknowledge the debt he owes to innumerable human souls who have made that very worship possible to him.

God conceals the past from us, that we may discover it afresh, and so make it our own. God conceals the future from us, that it may come,—come through the efforts of thousands of millions of wills

co-operating with his own. God conceals his heaven from us, that we ourselves may build the ladder of high resolves and noble living on the steps of which our souls shall ascend. God conceals himself from us, that we may at last taste the supreme joy of discovering that he is everywhere and in everything, and that "in him we live and move and have our being."

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THE STRICT AND NORMAL HUMANITY  
OF JESUS

BY

JOSEPH MAY

Pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia

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## THE STRICT AND NORMAL HUMANITY OF JESUS.

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The New Testament, *passim*, "CHRIST."

HERE is one of the most impressive syllables that human ears have heard.

Whether in its various phases of significance; in its history as an influence in the world at large; as a spring of comfort and consolation in the private mind of men; or as furnishing a moral and spiritual ideal; the Christ-conception has been one of the most remarkable our race has cherished,—perhaps the most remarkable.

That it has been, on the whole, dignified, gracious, beautiful, pure, elevating, no heart could possibly question. That it has even contained and preserved a great truth, an inspiring thought, we must, also, freely and gratefully admit.

No sensitive mind can contemplate this conception without emotion, without reverence. Whatever be our thoughtful conclusions in regard to it, the subject is to be treated with deepest respect and sympathy and with the utmost tenderness and delicacy.

But it is obviously one to be studied with a care and thoroughness which shall not only be candid and considerate, but which ought to be rigidly critical. Here, as everywhere, the truth is the one precious



thing. We can make, in the brief time of a sermon, but a most cursory examination of the questions presented by the Christ-idea; but some of the main points may be indicated.

The word "Christ" is a direct transcription from the Greek, without change of form except the dropping of a terminal syllable. The Greek was "Christos," which in Latin became "Christus." Its significance is perfectly clear. It was from a verb meaning "to anoint," so it means "anointed," "an anointed one." In its religious sense, the idea is strictly Hebrew; and the Greek term is, in its turn, only a translation of a Hebrew one. This latter was (as expressed in English) "Messiah." It never \* appears in the Old Testament as a *technical* term, but is always used in its general significance. Any person might be spoken of as "anointed," "an anointed one." But, of course, the term was used of but few. These were, especially, the high priests † and the kings, ‡ — rarely, but perhaps occasionally, prophets. §

In the earlier references, as in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Samuel, Kings, the actual mode of consecration to a sacred office, by pouring on consecrated oil, was clearly in view. In this literal sense, no doubt, David, mourning for his valiant captain Abner, cries out, "I am this day weak, though anointed king" (2. Sam. iii. 39). But, as thus used by the hero-king, we see how readily it would pass over to a metaphorical sense, with a more profound suggestive-

\* Dan. ix. 25 and 26 are corrected in our Revised Version to read "the anointed one."

† As Aaron and his sons. Ex. xxx. 22-33; Lev. iv. 3.

‡ 1 Sam. x. 1; xvi. 13.

§ Ps. cv. 15.

ness. In this sense, it was applied to the whole nation of Israel, as chosen and set apart by Yahweh to be his peculiar people, the recipient of especial grace and favor from him. Thus we read in Psalm lxxxiv. 9, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed"; in Psalm lxxxix. 38, "Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed"; and in Habakkuk iii. 13, "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, for the salvation of thine anointed."

In this metaphorical sense, the term was, also, applied to any individual upon whom the spirit of Yahweh seemed to have descended, to lay on him a commission. Thus Isaiah (lxi. 1) cries, in the beautiful words which Jesus aptly quoted to describe his own mission, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek." The same prophet (or, rather, the "great unknown," who two centuries later composed the latter portion of the book which stands under the name of Isaiah) applies the term, metaphorically, to Cyrus, King of Persia, who released the Jews from their bondage in Babylon when he conquered that mighty city (Isa. xlv. 1).

But, of course, this term was applied to, and at length became the technical title of, that great deliverer to whom, in its final decadence, the nation looked so eagerly forward. This personage was not distinctly conceived in the period which produced the books, even the latest ones, of the Old Testament; and so, as I have said, the term "the Messiah" does not appear there in a technical sense. As a high

authority says, the Old Testament furnishes not a fixed doctrine of the Messiah, but the *material* from which in subsequent times such a doctrine might be drawn.\* In a word, the idea of the personal Messiah is, as he expresses it, *post-canonical* with reference to the Old Testament. But the "material" was in a measure there, in the ancient writings, although less abundantly than is commonly supposed. First, as the idealized nation, "servant," and "son" of Yahweh; then, more clearly, as a Davidic king, of power and glory, who should be raised up and commissioned by Yahweh to restore and aggrandize the nation, and make it master of all others, the conception was shaping itself which, in the latest days of discomfiture and despair, came to possess the weary hearts of Yahweh's people with the vision of a personal Messiah. Buffeted by every nation, oppressed even by his own native princes, Israel lost faith in help of man, and fixed his anxious gaze on the vague but awful features of a deliverer, human, indeed, in nature, but exalted to superhuman dignity, and endowed by Yahweh with his divine commission, and with his power to conquer, to restore, and to rule. In this final, specialized form of the conception, the Messiah became the longing of the people, toward which the patriotic hearts of Judah strained with an intensity of which, in Christian times, the hope of the second advent of Jesus is a reflection, but only a feeble one. All the Messiah's characteristics became the object of minute curiosity and inquiry. The scribes identified each peculiarity of his person and

\* W. Robertson Smith, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, article "Messiah."

circumstance of his coming. His lineage must needs be that of their royal hero, David. His birthplace was determined from the ancient Scriptures. Day by day, night by night, as their actual fortunes darkened, earnest souls among the Jews watched and waited, intent to suffering, I dare say, for Messiah's approach.

Especially, of course, would this expectation stir and swell when any popular uprising against their oppressors stimulated the national consciousness and begat a brief hope of independence.

Pretenders there were, naturally,—“false Christs,”—false, or half-true in their own thought, misled by their own dreams, and for a time misleading others. Doubtless every man who promised to be a leader of the people was critically scanned for signs of his realizing the Messianic dream; and on the existence of such signs in him his chief hold upon the people would depend.

The development of the Messianic idea was thus a long process, at which I can now scarcely more than hint. Its final shaping into the expectation of a particular personage was, I would have you see, *later* than has usually been supposed or assumed.\* Our chief testimony to the nature and intensity of the expectation is the New Testament. It may well be (as some of our best modern authorities hold) that much there found is a reflection back upon those times from a later period in which the belief in Jesus as the Messiah had fully established itself among his

\*The technical title Messiah first occurs, in fact, in the so-called “Psalter of Solomon,” a work which appeared soon after the taking of Jerusalem by Pompey, or about the middle of the century preceding our era.

followers, from whom the New Testament documents come down to us.\* But it seems to me that enough remains to justify, on the whole, the common view, and to show that the expectation of the Messiah was very general and very intense and alert in the last century of the Jewish State.

It was in just this period that Jesus of Nazareth was born, grew up, and fulfilled his mission.

According to what I have said, we may well believe that, in such a time of unrest and portent and expectation, any individual who felt in himself the stir of great powers, of eager purposes, who seemed to hear a divine call within his soul summoning him to prophethood and leadership among his people, could hardly escape or decline the — at least, tentative — application to himself of the Messianic hope. It was to be a commission laid upon *some one* of the sons of men; it might be he as well as another. Piety, as much as ambition, would suggest it to his thoughts.

Hence that story in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew of Jesus's confidential inquiry of his disciples whom the people thought him to be, with Simon Peter's confident answer that he believed him to be the Messiah, while, on the whole, I think it probably a myth, is doubtless (as a genuine myth always is) a fairly just illustration of the actual facts of the time. It presents Jesus in a light too unspiritual to make it easily credible of him, in its form; yet the question of his realizing, in his own person, the Messiah-idea might naturally — it must almost inevitably — have arisen within his consecrated mind.

\* Kuenen's "Religion of Israel," chap. xii.; Carpenter's "Synoptic Gospels."

Nor need this thought have been unworthy of a man like Jesus. The profounder his sense of his consecration to the people's regeneration, the more exalted his interpretation of his mission, so much the more earnestly must any son of Israel have scanned the supposed prophecies to assure himself whether or not they testified of him that he had the might and purpose of Yahweh behind him in his efforts.

We must not *so* idealize Jesus as to dehumanize him and deprive him of *naturalness* in the workings of his mind. That is not to exalt him, but merely to make him unreal, which belittles him, and impairs his influence and effectiveness. The myth of the Temptation is almost *precious* as an illustration of and warning against a tendency which is not truly reverent, but is unsound. Jesus's true elevation consists (like that of every noble man) in this; that, while he could feel all the motives of a normal human mind and heart, he characteristically accepted only the highest, only the spiritual ones. This statement is, I think, literally correct, and of historical validity; and it commands from us unlimited admiration and reverence. The text is scarcely, in my judgment, an exaggeration, "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." I can believe it, because I do *not* think the fact so wholly exceptional as we are apt to assume in the lives of God's children. There may be, and has been, utter moral fidelity without the exceptional intellectual and spiritual endowments which mark this Master of men.

Certainly, we may say of Jesus that there is no trace of a disposition to self-aggrandizement in his

biography, although the record has come to us from, and has passed through, so many and such inferior hands. If he studied his own soul, or even the outward facts of his origin and person, for their testimony to his Messiahship, it was, visibly, in the spirit of a most pure consecration. And, if he accepted the nation's hope as realized in his case, it was to eliminate from the conception all that was mundane, and to give it a moral and spiritual interpretation such as the most exalted prophecy had scarcely hinted, and such as the national consciousness could only, as it did, reject.

But, whether Jesus did or did not apply to himself the Messianic hope, it was, as I have intimated, all but inevitable that any who became his followers should apply it to him. Other similar expectations were also current in that excited, credulous age. The Gospels describe John Baptist as refusing to be considered the Messiah, and choosing rather the character of his forerunner, who was expected to be the prophet Elijah returned to earth, as, even in modern times, great characters have been expected to reappear. That the conviction of his Messiahship controlled the minds of Jesus's immediate disciples, of all others who at all associated themselves with him, and for a time of the populace generally, the record plainly exhibits, even in its myths. Of those who, after following him for a while, "walked no more with him," doubtless most withdrew through disappointment at his delay in realizing the Messiah-hope or from a growing doubt that he was the true deliverer. The apostles were continually on the watch, during his life, for his visi-

ble assertion of his title to the office. When, at last, all these hopes were crushed by his arrest and crucifixion, they gave up in despair, and forsook him and fled. When the belief in his return to life cheered again their hearts, it revived also their hope in him as Messiah; and the first question they are represented as asking him, on his reported reunion with them, was, "Lord, dost thou at *this* time restore the kingdom of Israel?"\*

Thus in the established notions of his people was laid the foundation of the conception of Jesus as a specially delegated emissary from Deity; and a religious movement which, could it have been kept clear from such influences, would have been a purely spiritual one, was adulterated at its very source with ideas at once mundane, metaphysical, and visionary.

Speculation *about* Jesus, even in the minds of his very earliest disciples, usurped in large measure the energy of mind and heart which should have gone to understanding and following him as a spiritual leader. Alas, for this latter the time was not ripe! No time has yet been quite ripe for that true discipleship. Our question is whether it is ripe to-day — or we can make it so.

The first generation of Jesus's disciples, then, all Jews, accepted him as, and accepted him because they believed him to be, the Hebrew Messiah,—a purely imaginary personage and a worldly one.

The conviction which Peter is represented to have expressed † was that of all who accepted him — "Thou art the Christ."

The title, as we have seen, was one of specific

\* Acts i. 6.

† Matt. xvi. 16. Digitized by Google



meaning, and in its first stage implied only that one character, the Messiah of the Jews.

But the language further ascribed to Peter suggests the first change of significance which the term underwent.

Much time was not given for the endurance of the disciples' hope in its strict Hebrew interpretation. Jesus's career as a public man was but of a few months', at most of two or three years', duration. Then, as a crucified malefactor, all hope of his outward delivery of the nation was dispersed.

But he had taken the deepest hold on his followers' hearts; and, indeed, bereft, forlorn, there was no other leader to whom they could turn. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" the same Peter's despairing ejaculation, expressed their situation and feelings. Such a necessity as theirs, in such an age, was likely to create the source of its own relief. Traditional notions connected with the Messiahship, fragments of Scripture, mysterious words of his own, came to their help, arousing the expectation that, after a brief sojourn in the grave, their Master would return to life.

On this hope, at least, the disciples fastened with an avidity which, as I have hinted, could hardly but produce its own satisfaction in the supposed fact of his resurrection. The belief in this event spread like wild-fire among the hearts of a credulous community, which without it would have been utterly comfortless.

But, after all, while Jesus was believed to have returned to life, it was only in a phantasmal way. He never resumed his place among men as an effec-

tive human leader. The practical result of the resurrection-myth was to found firmly the conviction of his continued spiritual leadership, and the new interpretation of the idea and title "the Christ," as implying a world-wide, supernatural commission from Deity to be the healer and saviour of the nations.

This conception, however, could hardly have been developed along the lines it actually followed, had the Christian movement continued on Jewish soil, in the hands of Jewish disciples. It was Paul, a Jew by birth and education, yet Greek also in association and culture,—a man who never saw Jesus; who, except as its opponent, never had more than a very superficial relation to the Jewish-Christian propaganda and its leaders, the original apostles; whose Christianity was more the creation of his own mind and heart than derived from them,—it was Paul who, more than all others, gave outline and distinctness to the *second* conception of the Christ.

Paul fully believed, of course, that Jesus realized in its true sense the Hebrew Messiahship;\* but, as he emancipated Christianity from its national restrictions, and made it an inward, not an outward matter, so he enlarged and spiritualized the idea of the Messiahship of Jesus, so that its first significance rapidly faded, and settled into a subsidiary place in men's thoughts. Jesus as the Christ was to the *second* generation of converts (mostly Gentile as they were) not the mere Hebrew deliverer, but the spiritual mediator sent forth by the Universal God to be the Saviour of men, reconciling them to Himself.

\* Acts xiii. 23, *et seq.*

The title which particularly expresses this secondary meaning of the term Christ is the "Son of God." In the metaphysical sense which it soon acquired under the influence of Greek modes of thought, the idea which it suggests is not in sympathy with the spirit of Hebraism. As a technical term, the phrase was unfamiliar to the Hebrews of an earlier period. It nowhere occurs in the Old Testament.\*

Angels and exceptional men were sometimes called "sons" of God, but only in the general sense of God's children, or metaphorically, to mark their power or goodness.† The nation was sometimes personified as the son of Yahweh;‡ but any idea of sonship to God which even *seemed* to bridge the infinite chasm between humanity and transcendent Deity would have been, and was, a deep impiety to the Hebrews. It was the true ground of the wholly genuine abhorrence of Jesus and the hostility to him on the part of the priests and people, and was the essence of their charge against him at his trial, that he had professed to be the Son of God, and had, by calling God his Father, arrogated to himself some sort of equality with the Deity who to the Hebrews, at all periods, was so utterly exalted above all other beings as to have no generic relation to any.

Yet, as I have said, Hebraism had admitted a metaphorical fatherhood in Deity; and Jesus had actually made this fatherhood literal and real in his exquisite representations of God. Probably, indeed, the idea

\* A single text (Dan. iii. 35) in our English Bible has been amended in the Revised Version so as to remove it.

† Gen. vi. 2; Job i. 6, ii. 1.

‡ Ex. iv. 22; Hosea xi. 1.

had germinated among the more spiritual of his predecessors. The title, "Son of God" (while it is said to be nowhere found in pre-Christian literature), would appear, from Paul's familiar use of it, to have been current in the Jewish schools as a designation of the Messiah. In some such manner, at any rate, the way had been prepared for that belief in Jesus as in a special and exalted sense "the Son" of God, which appears throughout the Gospels, (perhaps tentatively more often than positively,) which rapidly developed after his death, and which the title "Christ," the anointed one, henceforth peculiarly suggested.\*

This double conception of Jesus as the Hebrew Messiah and the Son of God occupied and inspired the mind of Paul. The progress of his thought, by which the metaphysical idea of the Son replaced in emphasis the popular notion of the Messiah, appears pretty plainly in his Epistles.† Jesus, as its illustration and cynosure, must take on an expanded dignity corresponding to that enlarged view of the nature and mission of Christianity which Paul originated and propagated. The apostle's view rapidly developed to the idea of a being, still human in nature and certainly never in the least confused with Deity, but idealized and exalted to the highest conceivable plane of qual-

\* From the tenor of the first three Gospels, it would appear almost certain that Jesus did not apply to himself the title "Son of God," although not refusing it when applied to him by others. He preferred the title "Son of Man," which is, however, strictly Messianic, and was, no doubt, chosen by him for that reason.

The *Fourth* Gospel cannot confidently be cited on any biographical point, not merely for its late and unknown origin, but because it is written with a purpose, to which all its facts are made to conform. It is properly a tract, designed to show that Jesus *was* the Son of God and the Logos. It is, of course, highly valuable to illustrate a certain stage and mode of Christian belief.

† See E. H. Hall's "Orthodoxy and Heresy," p. 24, *et seq.*

ity and function, and whom indwelling Godhead filled to the utmost measure of his capacity. Rabbinical lore and Gnostic metaphysics united to engage a mind constitutionally lacking in poetic imaginativeness, yet (as such minds often are) none the less prone to them, in speculations which now seem crude and vain, but of which no language was too high-strained to express the outcome. In his sublimest passages, Paul continually and emphatically refers to Jesus as man,\* yet as Christ he is "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature." He is the agent in creation. "In him were all things created that are in the heavens and upon the earth." He was pre-existent. "He is before all things, and in him all things consist." † The scheme of doctrine at which Paul arrived was summed up in his Epistle to the Galatians (iv. 4): "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law that he might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons"; and in that to Timothy (1 Tim. ii. 5): "There is one God, one mediator also between God and men, *himself* man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." ‡

As Christianity spread among pagans and Hellenistic Jews, it encountered, moreover, another metaphysical conception, which had for centuries, and over a wide-spread area, a marvellous vogue. This idea

\* 1 Cor. xv. 21; Rom. v. 15; Acts xvii. 31; 1 Cor. xv. 47 (Revised Version).

† Col. i. 15-17.

‡ So highly Gnostic is much that is ascribed to Paul in some of these passages as to cause some of the Epistles which bear his name to be disputed, especially Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians.

was that of the "Logos," an emanation going forth from Deity, as his agent and vicar in the world of men and things, to which a reality almost separate and personal was at length ascribed. The first verse of the Fourth Gospel describes this "Logos" or "Word" of God, and how the conception became associated with the person of Jesus as the Christ that Gospel vividly illustrates. Misleading as it has been in respect to the real Jesus, the Fourth Gospel is thus of the highest value, as illustrating this progress and development of a remarkable metaphysical conception.

I can only now briefly repeat what I have formerly shown here more at large,—that it was through the identification of the Christ-idea with the Logos-idea that the doctrine of Christ was recommended to the Greek world, and its character and form definitely fixed.

Henceforth (although it took centuries before the amazing result was fully reached) the steps were direct and sure to the ultimate identification of Christ with Deity, in that audacious speculation of theology, the doctrine of the Trinity.

From the idea of a man especially endowed and commissioned by God for a particular divine purpose; to that of a man glorified and exalted to the highest conceivable plane of being; thence to that of an emanation from Deity far above manhood, yet below Godhead; finally to identification with Deity in an unthinkable confusion of persons,—these are the steps which the Christ-idea has travelled.

Once such a train of wild and weird speculations

was started, loosened from all hold of reality, and there was no logical point at which it could be stopped, short of the extreme which it actually reached.\*

There is a providence in all history, social, mental, moral; and doubtless things could not have been other than they have been. The fine spiritual thought of Jesus, his exalted character, fell into the custody of men often of noble aims and purposes, but limited by the mental conditions of their time, possessed by its theories, prone to abstruse speculations in which the energies of minds, unchecked by natural science and sound mental philosophy, ran riot. The same men were weighted by tradition and urged by that spirit of dogmatism which a mistaken view of the nature and office of religious truth sustains to-day.

It may be that, had not the person and thought of Jesus been seized upon by these tendencies of his age and that which followed it, and in their clouded amber been imperfectly preserved, they must have been lost to us altogether, or have survived only in a vague tradition or in still more imperfect remains than those which now we possess. It is difficult to draw his complete portrait from relics so scanty and fragmentary, and which have been so moulded by the ideas of others, as those which the Gospels present

\* It took, however, almost four centuries to reach the final result. After many vicissitudes, through debates often violent and accompanied by physical collisions of the disputants, through no little practice of the arts of the politician and the caucus, the doctrine of the Deity of Christ was affirmed at the Council of Nice in A.D. 325. The co-equality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son was affirmed at the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381. The Trinity finally received its full doctrinal statement in the so-called Creed of Athanasius, the origin of which is obscure, but which was not known to the Greek Church before A.D. 1000, nor to the Latin Church before A.D. 800. (Its doctrinal elements, however, were familiar some centuries earlier.)

to us. This *cannot* be done dogmatically. It is a task which each disciple must finally perform for himself.

Happily, however, Jesus was too great a man to be readily hidden even by the vast clouds of speculation which gathered so rapidly and thickly about his personality. On the relics which we have, the essential traits of his character, the elements of his thought, his fundamental principles of conduct, are ineffaceably stamped. For the practical purposes of spiritual edification and moral incitement, his image is not insufficiently clear; and it is of all the treasures of the moral world the choicest. As thought grows clearer with the advance of intellectual development, as science extends its trustworthy researches, as philosophy grows surer, as the moral standard rises, we are actually able to re-create him more surely, simply because the world is advancing a little nearer to the plane upon which he moved.

In those metaphysical and mystical speculations about Jesus which have resulted in the standard creeds of Christendom, and which have moulded the character of its discipleship; in the dogmas which have impaired his simple humanity, and have deformed, not elevated, his personality in the vain effort to magnify him; imposing and sometimes gracious and beautiful as the figments they present sometimes appear, I believe there is no reality, no truth, and so no spiritual life, no moral re-enforcement. I believe that, while they were probably (as I have suggested) inevitable in such a world as this, and in such periods as those in which they grew up; while (as the worth-



less "gangué" surrounds the precious ore, defending what it hides) they may have done some service in preserving the knowledge of Jesus through ages too gross to understand him as he was; in themselves they have been aside from and alien to the real and spiritual truth embodied in the nature, character, and life of Jesus, and offered in his religious and moral teachings. They have been unspiritual, melodramatic attempts to give factitious grandeur to verities the real dignity of which lay all the while in their simplicity; travesties of the actual divine order in its relation to humanity; essentially childish, however grandiose the terms in which they have been presented and the stage on which the drama of theology has been conducted.

They have, therefore, turned men's thought, faith, and effort *away from* the truth. They have repressed the true spiritual ardor, exciting false and unreal enthusiasms in sincere, aspiring hearts. They have deadened the normal religious hunger which only the true spiritual meat can satisfy. They have hidden the real man Jesus from the world, and have diverted men from the only true discipleship,—that discipleship which should take up the same cross of spiritual endeavor, of moral self-purification, of brotherly loving service, which made the threefold structure of his holy life. Metaphysical *belief about him* lamentably took the place of the true and practical following of Jesus.

This long, long road, my friends, has all to be traced back! The Christian world is beginning to trace it back. The hold of miracle, of the so-called

supernatural, of the metaphysical and mystical, is visibly loosening among all the sects. In the vast Roman Catholic communion this is chiefly and unhappily shown by the loss of all care for religion among great masses of the people of Europe, and these the most intelligent, who, when the alternative is presented which that authoritative organization alone offers them, dogma or nothing, answer, "Then nothing." To the educated class in modern Europe the Catholic theology is what the popular religion was to the same class in the later ancient Rome,—a fable.

In the great Protestant world similar phenomena are patent, both in Europe and America. Agnosticism, suspense of faith, indifferentism, mental unrest, abound. A very great portion of the population have utterly deserted the Church in Protestant Europe and in America. At the same time (and this is one great hope for religion and the religious life of the people) orthodox theologians are beginning to unclose their eyes to the light that is now abundantly pouring in upon their domain from natural science, Biblical science, history, and philosophy. They are beginning to attack with earnestness and ability the problems which eighteen hundred years have indeed made complicated for them. Though as yet they go mincingly, clinging to as much as possible of their creeds, orthodox scholars are actually coming to the same views of the Scriptures at which the most unfettered students have arrived. Two eminent divines have but just now been on trial for such heresies, and, if not victorious in their struggles, have certainly with them the

sympathy of a large and influential section of their denomination. You know well how many private minds are quietly rejecting the modes of faith in which they have been brought up. Our friends in the orthodox churches are apt to be offended and hurt if we suggest to them that they and their preachers hold some of the cardinal points in the doctrinal systems which stand unmodified in their Confessions and Articles of Belief, and for which, while they remain there, the practical supporters of those churches are certainly morally responsible.

These are but beginnings, I know; but they are the beginnings of a process which, like the other, cannot stop until the extreme result is reached, any more than the snows of this winter can remain unmelted before the coming spring. The alternative has always been "Reason or Rome"; the authority of a church, a book, a creed, or that of the private soul. The whole path, I repeat, is to be travelled back. The whole intricate skein is to be unravelled.

What will be the result?

It will be rational religion; the religion of nature and reason; the only religion which is sound, which is secure, which has in it the elements of truth, which is the spring of life; — the religion of reflection, of experience, of observation, of life; the religion to which men come by natural and genuine processes of heart and mind; the religion which harmonizes with whatever else we learn of our nature and our life by rational methods, by the normal use of our faculties, — this religion as contrasted with all schemes whatever which profess to rest upon the affirmations of men of

bygone generations, upon any kind of asserted authoritative revelation from God to any soul but that of each several child of His stretching upward to Him for light and life.

It will be, therefore, *spiritual* religion as contrasted with that intellectual and formal religion which the world has had so long; for only a religion which is of the spirit can finally satisfy the spirit.

This process at which I hint can have, in respect to Jesus, but one result; namely, to restore him to the category of *normal humanity*, unqualified, unconfused; the highest category of being save only that which is the same (as he taught) in kind, only infinite in degree,—that is, Deity. All other conceptions of his nature are unreal, fanciful, unsuggestive, unfruitful. They will all drop away as the enlightened modern mind expands, and asserts itself in theology as it has done in every other department of science. The essential triviality of all that has been added to the majesty of true manhood in Jesus will more and more clearly appear. Their false sanctity will fall from notions made sacred by association, gentle, sweet, dainty, but wanting in virility, and which, under the guise of the supernatural, have really only been *unnatural*, and so untrue and impossible.

Thus, in place of the mystical Christ, we shall be led back to the commanding but gracious presence of the man Jesus, who has indeed been hidden from the eyes of most Christian men since the day when his body was laid in the new sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea.

My friends, in the work of the restoration of the

true image of Jesus, so long encrusted with speculation and superstition, it has been the peculiar privilege of the religious body which you and I represent humbly to share. Its mission has, indeed, only by degrees revealed itself to the Unitarian communion. Our earlier predecessors retained, of course, much of the mystical belief about Jesus which has been current in the Christian Church. Two strands only of the cord which had bound Christian thought the early Unitarians ventured to unloose. They untied the bond of authority, and vindicated the right of every man to his own honest judgment and opinion. This they did tentatively and hesitatingly for a time, yet with increasing boldness and fidelity, and at length fully.

Their other service was in detaching from the coils of dogma, in which the person of Jesus was involved, the conception of his Deity.

Unitarian Christianity a hundred years ago, even fifty years ago, was still Scriptural and still supernaturalistic. Its Christ was a sublimated phantasm, exquisite perhaps, but having the reality and substantiality neither of Deity nor humanity. It had its structure of miracle and its hesitating theories of inspiration and salvation. It was a half-way house, and had the comfort and security of neither terminus.

But the last half-century has brought us into the open light of day. Let God be praised that a process often so injurious has been so largely accomplished without the loss of faith in the realities of the spiritual world, of reverence for truth, of tenderness for all true sanctities! But it is plain that, as a body, we

now stand for perfect freedom of thought, for the naturalness of religion, and, in the particular of which I have been speaking, for the strict and normal humanity of Jesus.

On us, then, at this moment, especially rests the duty of presenting this imposing figure, freed from childish trappings of mystery, in the dignity of that spiritual childship to God which is the generic inheritance of all men, to the waiting world.

The responsibility is weighty, but it is gracious; and the task is now most hopeful. Let us accept it without hesitation. Let us be courageous and explicit; for our commission is merely that of resuming the actual work of Jesus, which was to convince men in theory and to lead them to feel it and make it true in fact, that humanity and Deity are in substance one,—that we are the children of God and he is our Father.









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IN RELIGION CONTRASTED.

BY

THOMAS R. SLICER

Minister of the Church of our Father, Buffalo, N.Y.

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## THE OLD MOTIVES AND THE NEW MOTIVES IN RELIGION CONTRASTED.

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FROM horse-power and treadmill to electric motor is an interval filled by the struggles of genius summoned to the aid of human necessity. From the halting and feeble motives which impelled men to religion to the robust religion which claims its own self-direction is no less an interval filled by the struggles of human souls to solve the problem of their own existence.

In that elder time of civilization, industry went halting, and exacted much from human life in nerve strain and weariness. In our newer order the weariness which comes to the worker represents industry raised to a power of vaster performance, and such nerve strain as is now suffered is the tribute paid to ambition oftener than to the crying needs of common life.

Some will doubt this statement. They will point to the lingering horrors of modern life. But the tide of immigration flows toward the points of enterprise, and "the steady gain of man" is ever in the field where the newest energy deploys its forces. We read of Thoreau and Walden with delight, but he must be very weary of the world who seeks the joys of hermitage.

In like manner it may be doubted that the religion of to-day has raised the power of moral performance

and deepened the springs of life. The appeal must be to life itself, its state, its work, its consciousness, if we would find an answer to such doubts as these.

If it be said that the new motives of religion disturb the fine ecstasies of Saint Francis as he kneels upon an unsubstantial cloud and discourses pious music from his violin, or if it be said that the newer motives are less strenuous than the old ones, or that they "cut the nerve of missionary enthusiasm," or that they are difficult to explain to the uncultured, or that they are wanting in poetic suggestion, or that they do not subdue and win the unspiritual,— if, in a word, we are told to regard what religion has achieved when led in chains by the old compulsion, to all this we must make answer out of the joy of a freer life and sense of deeper obligation in our freedom, to which the new motives have been pioneers to open a path for the soul.

We answer to these objectors, who take their own doubts to be arguments to other men, that Saint Francis had much better leave his insulated self-levitation in the clouds and stand firmly on his legs, conducting his "bride, Poverty," to a better dwelling; that the new motives, if not strenuous in the old ruffianly way, are as persuasive as love can make them; that, if "the nerve of missionary enthusiasm is cut" when a cureless hell is found to be a No Man's Land, it may be that the "nerve of missions" is like that simian muscle found still in the human leg. It may be broken and promptly healed, and the subject feel no inconvenience. Or, if it be still further urged that the new motives do not appeal to the common

mind, the answer may be instantly made that it is in the common mind they have originated. They are motives arising not from some obscure and cloistered learning, but they are the protest of common sense, joining the pleadings of common affection. No difficulty has ever been found in stating these new motives to a mind, however unlearned, providing always that it is not a mind already sophisticated, and loaded down with the junk of systems that really have gone out of business. The first anxiety, therefore, of the mind which finds itself inhospitable to the religion of to-day should be to make a clean surrender of its contents,—contents it really does not value,—and afford an unencumbered dwelling for the new tenant of the soul. But, if we are told that our motives do not commend themselves to the unspiritual, then that shall be their vindication. It is a false method in education to fill the mind with what must be unlearned. It is a false standard of truth which finds an easy adjustment to the minds not set upon reality. It is a mistaken liberalism which courts the company of license. Or, if to complete the objections to new motives in religion, we are summoned to see the outcome of the old motives in the Christianity of to-day, then we answer that it is not necessary to point to any surer proof of utter failure of the old processes of thought than is furnished by the dismal travesty of Christianity which confronts us. Is this the restatement in modern life of the ideals which filled the great souls in which Christianity first had its springs? We do not deny that there are a multitude of holy souls who are called Christian, and have been moved

by the old motives, but whose goodness springs from the natural ground of religion in man, and has been achieved in spite of what they believe. The test of any motive is to give it unhindered access and undisputed sway in a human soul. What, then, it shows as logical outcome is its vindication. Is the ethical state of modern trade an outcome of the ethics of that clear soul of Nazareth? Does the stupendous sacrifice of Paul and his spiritual *abandon* survive side by side with his belated Rabbinitism and his spiritual illumination? After eighteen hundred years does the sublime yet pathetic effort of the early Church to adjust human relations survive in modern society, either in its effort to get a living or to hinder another man from getting a living?

No. The claim that we are on the latter confines of a golden age of faith, which will pass into eclipse should the new motives for religion prevail, is a claim against which history lifts its protest; and this enfeebled compromise, which boasts itself unshorn of strength, is lost in the Philistine laughter which sees religion prostrate. And many who are not Philistine, simple, untrained minds, repudiate religion altogether, as not being up to sample. Our real difficulty as advocates of religion is to convince these spirits in revolt that all the higher poetry of religion, all assured science of the natural world, all tender human affections, and all practical ethics of common life,—all are with the rebel in his protest against a failure that refuses to acknowledge its insolvency, and goes down blindly into the pit of an exhausted mine, seeking for treasure to enrich the world.

Channing was a profound believer in the permanence of Christianity as "founded on man's nature," as answering to his deepest wants. Yet it was Channing who said: "I do not say that what we now call Christianity is to live forever. I think not. I hope not. Christianity is obscured, almost lost." We often shudder at the crude denials of unreconciled rebels against an order that has deceived them, an administration of the offices of religion which they have discovered are a repeated charm that has lost its power over sorrow and sin. It is the reasonableness of this protest in the most spiritual men which leads us to feel that the crudest and least considered of all the utterances of what is called unbelief has a holier hope for its inspiration than any philosophy of compromise that labors to postpone the crisis of religion. The natural man repudiates the exercises of religion which have not resulted in an athletic health. In an age which is exploiting the very elements, to know the secrets of life and being, men are impatient of prescribed motives which no longer move. Here is the condition prescribed by Dr. Martineau:—

"For much of the agnosticism of the age, the gnosticism of theologians is responsible. They have inconsiderately overstrained the language of religion till its meaning breaks, and the coherent thinker easily picks up its ruins to show that they contain nothing."—*Study of Religion*, Preface.

What are these old motives to religion? They scarcely need naming. They have all one spring for their origin and one purpose in their operation. They originate in the assumption that man is in a



lost state, fallen from a state of innocence so complete that the moment he knew anything he discovered that he had destroyed himself because he did not know anything. In other words, the effort to know "what was good and what was evil" had left him with the perilous knowledge, but without the power to make any use of it for his own advantage,—the first instance of higher education at the expense of practical life. What a very simple fiction is here, destined to overthrow the self-respect of the human race! This is the starting-point of every motive to religion of that older type. A totally depraved human nature speculates upon the possibility of its further ruin, and admits that it cannot save itself. It hears now the command, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth"; and, if its reasoning powers had not gone down in the general reduction of moral values, it would know that such a command would be equivalent to lifting all restrictions from contagion and pronouncing a blessing on the spread of disease. But here appears not the logical conclusion that self-destruction is the whole duty of man, if he is capable of no good thing; but instead there is revealed to this fallen creature by the baffled Creator that what he cannot do, and what God could not do the first time he tried has now been made possible, and a system of nicely graduated forfeits has been adopted in heaven for the regulation of earth,—a system which begins in human sacrifices to an inhuman deity, and ends in a sacrifice in which the sufferer is at once the victim, the priest, the Saviour, and God himself. Henceforward man's debt is paid, and "heaven is opened to

all believers" who can believe the impossible. Was there ever in the history of religions a more complete wreck of reason and failure of common sense? It justifies the characterization of it given by Macaulay: "It is the perpetration of an impossible offence to be paid for in an inconceivable coin."

Now, it is not for a moment to be understood that this brief statement is the whole history of this doctrine of the recovery of man by religion. It is instead the resultant of the speculations of the Church since the days of Anselm,—the Church that professes to speak for historic Christianity. Of course, we perfectly know that no such scheme can be injected successfully into the Old Testament scripture, where, after the telling of the stories of the creation which Hebrew thought had borrowed, it goes on to work out life's problems in a practical conflict between the authority of the priest and the moral passion of the prophets. We know with equal clearness that no such scheme is hinted at by Jesus of Nazareth in any record of his thoughts remaining to us. That record gives us indubitable proof that his one purpose was to convince the spiritual nature of man that it had inalienable rights in the fatherhood of God. Therefore, he has no theory of the fall of man, and tells the sublimest truths of his religion—the fatherhood of God, the universality of religion, and the spirituality of worship—to the humblest and least respectable of the common people who surround him; and he gives as his justification that these things are not for "the wise and the prudent,"—the sophisticated and the canny,—“but for babes,”—simple people, who are

nearest to the naturalness of life. Nor did the early Church lay the burden of this rescue of man on any metaphysical compact worked out in what Jonathan Edwards, with unconscious humor, called "The Social Trinity." For nearly eight centuries the early Church entertained as its theory of atonement a dramatic plan of attack, in which, as in a stupendous duel between the Son of God and the Prince of this world, the apparent overthrow of the heavenly champion is the real defeat of the earthly usurper and rebellious ruler of the earth.

When later the profligate youth of Anselm turned to piety with "the precipitate of the young blood," the tides of his repentance flowed in on his thought of God; and the divine wrath to be appeased was in the exact ratio of the sense of sin to be forgiven. It was an illustration of that acute remark of Fontanelle, "God made man in his own image, and man has ever since returned the compliment by making God in his."

There is nothing sacred about the fashions in theology, which should make them objects of reverence. They do not bear upon their front the shining stones of the high-priest's breastplate, in the glitter of which we are to discover the will of God. It has been a part of the tyranny exercised upon the minds of the unlearned that they have been led to accept as of divine authority those shifting theories of atonement which have left man still struggling with his sin. God was to be satisfied, but at the expense of the growing discontent of his children.

One word is the synonyme for the motives moving

toward religion in all this; and that word is "fear," — fear of God, for his wrath is hanging over unrepentant man; fear of sin, for it is the suggestion of an evil power which divides the sovereignty of the world with God, a Frankenstein which defies all efforts of its author to control it; fear of life's delights, as being a snare; fear to love one's wife and children too much, lest we lose them by a jealous God's determination that we shall love only him, "and enjoy him forever"; fear of the sweet-souled Son of Man, for he is to be our judge; fear of death, for it ends probation and fixes our eternal state; fear of hell, for it is a place into which the saints can see, but none can go for rescue, even if being in heaven had not diverted every tender affection of their human lives. These were the manifold fears which moved men of old to love God. Even Carlyle quotes with approval the bitter proverb, "Thou wouldst do little for God if the devil were dead."

Well, the devil is dead. Are there few that serve God? We answer, The age is profoundly religious. Profoundly religious, though it has repudiated a trembling timidity, and declares for the soul's right to know God unhindered by any fear. It matters nothing to the aspect of the sunrise and its day and nothing to the quiet evening with its stars that Copernicus reversed the procession of the planetary system, and plucked the still earth from the centre and set it spinning on the levels of the lighted path which now it must obediently follow. Men still look eastward for the lamp which lights them to their labor, and westward for the flaming signal which bids them go

to rest. The facts remain when all their definitions change. God himself is "constant to a constant change." So religion grows. Its wider heaven invites it, and stoops to welcome its approach. Long ago it was written that "perfect love casteth out fear, for fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." So it has come to pass, since love is the supreme grace of life, since love is the test of relationship between God and his children and between those children themselves, since love is God's other name, which we use when the old name has lost its meaning. So it must be true that love, casting out fear, grows to fill the place which was occupied by fear, and turns to do the duties which fear, the cripple, could not do.

The new motives for religion shine by contrast with the old motives, in that the religion of to-day repudiates fear. It is not afraid of human nature; for it is the very ground of religion, and grows that religion as native to its soil.

It is not afraid of the consequence of sin; for, since they cannot be escaped nor evaded in any world, religion declares for life dedicated to the will of God. Of sin it is afraid, as one might fear a wild creature not yet tamed.

Religion now is not afraid of life, for it is not so much a probation nor a discipline as it is an opportunity and a delight. It is not afraid of life's tenderest and purest relationships, for "in their face do we behold the Eternal." The humanities of God visit us in love's daily sacraments, and we are purified as we commune with God, calling him by household names;

and, when upon our common life fall its common sorrows, we do not fear the hand of God is on us. We rather believe that underneath us are "the everlasting arms," and we "commit our souls in well-doing unto him as unto a faithful Creator."

Thus shred by shred our fears fall from us; and our souls are "not unclothed, but clothed upon," for already "mortality is swallowed up of life." Thus the new watchword of religion is love. Its new expression is life.

But the change appears not alone in this deepening confidence in God as in his world; but it declares for life here and now, between men the bond of obligation and the guarantee of justice. The old view put religion first and morals second,—not in their order, which is the order of nature, but in their importance, which is not the order of nature. Religion is before morals, as God was before man; but the apprehension of religion must be ever in the terms of human relationships, so that the new motives of religion are finer than the word spoken only lately in a Christian church, in which it was declared to be "safer to accept baptism with a life astray than to lead a good life and forego that saving sacrament." It was prescribed as a greater safety. Men who feel the new motives refuse to be safe, and pray to be doomed to the company of the good, wherever they may be. And to this end religion in its sanest moments ceases to be too introspective or speculative or transcendental. All these it may be, according to the genius and temperament of its subject; but, first of all, it declares its business to be the adjustment of human

relations, "the making the world a better place to live in." It is first ethical and then spiritual. It finds more of God in the rightening of wrong than in the mystic reveries of a secluded sanctity. For this reason in all the churches the life of the man "who went about doing good" places the beautiful pictures of the Beatitudes so constantly before reverent eyes that already the pure in heart begin to see God, and to see him unconfused by any theory of his being or conflict of his attributes. Religion is so busy bringing in the kingdom of man, making it, as the Son of man declared it should be, the very kingdom of heaven, that we have been much turned away from settling nice questions of the employments of God "before all worlds," the administration of God in this world, and the destiny of God's children in any world. We have thus put the duty of religion into the present tense, and have made "the stern daughter of the voice of God" more than the echo which it must be to the Pharisee and scribe of any age. We no longer quote much. The verdict of those who heard the great Teacher was the verdict of the convicted mind. He speaks "as one having authority." Religion fails of its audience and of its mission when it becomes a mere echo of full words spoken long ago. It has come to pass that this focalizing of enthusiasm in the present and the near future has changed the whole outlook of religion, has given a new purpose to the Church, has intensified the sense of work to be done in the ministry of religion, has even simplified and clarified the very vocabulary of prayer.

Of course, as a result of all this, it is said: "Theology has become shallow." "The queen of the sciences has lost her throne." This last is true; for the throne was deserted by the court, and the court has been repudiated by the people, and the monarchical system of priestly and learned rule is passing away, and we of this age are witnessing a revolt of reason which will lead eventually to the commonwealth of free souls.

But the other claim, that theology has become shallow, deserves a word of recognition. Was theology ever other than shallow since those earliest days, when it left the adoration of the ultimate good, and determined in fanciful speculation what the ultimate good was like; when it discussed with wrath and blows whether "one begotten of the unbegotten inherited the unbegottenness of his begetter"? Was it less shallow when it left the Greek intuition of God as immanent, and pitched upon the Roman imperial conceit of God as regnant and magisterial? Is it more shallow now that religion is slowly and painfully feeling its way back again to the larger thought of the Greek, as alone large enough to match the universe new discovered by those who have sailed that "sea of darkness" which modern science has bravely crossed? Is theology in its seminaries likely to become more profound when it turns from the preparation of men for the ministry of religion, and appeals to courts of law, secular and ecclesiastical, to confirm it in its investments, that it may "live by bread alone" rather than by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"? Has the pro-



fundity of theology satisfied itself when it has matched unspeakable mysteries to unanswerable questions? Does it feel vindicated by setting standards of judgment for its missionaries in those very particulars which the moment he lands among a more enlightened heathen the missionary must never remember or learn to forget?

No. The answer to all this claim against the new motives which move men to religion that they lead to a shallow theology is simply this: Speculative theology always was and must be shallow. The deep sea soundings of the life of God show nothing brought up from that abysm. We move about the errands of our little lives upon the surface of this profound of being. We have forgotten the day we set sail. We do not know on what shore we shall land at last. We are carried willingly forward by that breath of God that "breatheth where it will." We rejoice to feel the tides of the Eternal Spirit lift and sway us; but, when we would sound this awful depth, our plummet swings in the shifting currents of the surface near the hand which holds it, and the silent deeps of God give back no word. The new motives for religion match themselves to the oldest in this. "Thy way is in the sea, thy paths in the great waters. Thy footsteps are not known." "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains. Thy judgments are a great deep." "Justice and judgment are the foundation of thy throne." Compared with these deliverances of the most ancient and the newest faith, the superficial guesses about God that are elevated to the authority of knowledge strike the reverent soul as profane,—a

hindrance at once to the purity of religion and the strength of reason.

It has been well said: "The dissolution of a mythology is no less natural a process than its growth, and is indeed secured the moment we have discovered how it has grown. To see its construction is to feel its dissolution."

That which may be said of any mythology applies to all theology on its speculative side, and its hindrance to real religion is in the exact proportion in which it declares its definitions final and all contradiction of Him a breach of Orthodoxy. We have not long gone by that date which celebrates the nailing of Luther's theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg. The experience of four hundred years has confirmed the great truth which he thus enunciated: —

"I will be free and not give myself prisoner to any authority, be it that of the emperor or the universities or the pope, in order that I may confidently declare everything which I recognize as truth, be it maintained by a Catholic or by a heretic, whether a church council has accepted it or rejected it."

Thus Luther, harried by theological experts and ecclesiastical inquisition, spoke; but Channing spoke for the same large interpretation of human liberty in the interest of a deeper religious life when he said: "The right to which we are bound is not insulated, but connected, and one with the infinite rectitude and with all the virtue of all being. In following it, we promote the health of the universe" (Note-book).

Or, again, it may be said in the language of a great teacher of the present time, "The paramount aim of

religion is to seek with all our might the highest welfare of the world we live in, and the realization of its ideal greatness and nobleness and blessedness" (Professor Edward Caird). This is but an elaboration of the golden rule announced by Emanuel Kant: "Act as though the principle by which you act were by your will to become a universal law of nature."

How easy it seems for religion, hearing these utterances of inspired spiritual life, to lay aside all crutches which are offered to its robust activity! It is not lame nor maimed nor feeble. It stands erect, and exhorts its fellows to freedom with the words:—

"Lean not on one mind constantly  
Lest where one stood before two fall.  
Something God hath to say to thee  
Worth hearing from the lips of all.

"All things are thine estate, yet must  
Thou first display the title-deeds,  
And sue the world. Be strong, and trust  
High instincts more than all the creeds."

What does this brief contrast of the "old motives to religion" with the motives called "new" leave us for our strengthening as religious men and women?

The old motives were based in definitions concerning God and man, as at variance. The new motives show God and man sharing the same life and embraced in the same unity of being.

The old motives sought a means to reconcile God to man. The new motives beseech man "to be reconciled to God."

The old motives bade man fear God, and love him in the midst of fear. The new motives show God as

man's best friend by no persuasion, but by consciousness of love that casteth out fear. "He puts his hand into the hand of the Infinite Ally."

The old motives measured religion by intellectual accuracy as judged by standards in the keeping of a class. The new motives measure religion by human sympathy judged by the nature and necessities of man.

The old motives had for their inspiration the meditation of a unique personage, who came between God and man. The new motives hail this revealer of God who comes between God and man only as the lenses of the telescope come between the eye and the stars.

The old motives bade us love God for what Christ had done, and left us worshipping Christ for what God had done, thus reversing by the logic of the heart the dictates of the schools. The new motives lead to a worship of God which has for its opening sentence, "Each man shall find God for himself,"—Jesus of Nazareth and all his brothers in the spirit alike in this divine task.

The old motives summoned us to obedience by commands of an external law. The new motives win us to obedience by loyalty to laws which are written in our nature, and read in the highest and dearest relations of life. The old motives were regulative and provisional. The penalties came early in their messages. The new motives are constitutive and constructive, and their penalties are not present to any mind which loves the truth and serves it.

The old motives were an invitation to happiness in a remote and vague heaven. The new motives declare "God to be the happiest being in the universe," and all souls to be glad here and always with his joy.

Thus the man whose religion has become "a passionate devotion to the will of God" has put away from him, as irreligious in themselves and tending to irreligion, all motives that are grounded in self-interest and in distrust of the order of God's world, all motives that are simply regulative and a compromise with the weakness of the baser nature, all motives that shut the soul away from immediate communion with the fatherhood of God, all motives which separate and estrange the brothers of the race, all motives which separate life into secular and sacred, present and future, earthly and heavenly. The man who thus dedicates himself to the religion of to-day finds in its newer, clearer, stronger motives abundant compensation for what may seem a loss to those less devoted to reality.

If it be said to such a one, This is not Christianity as we see it to-day, he replies: It may not be modern Christianity, but it is the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. But it does not need even that great name to certify it to the experience of the soul. The human soul has a right to its own discoveries. It knows what it has made its own. If it be said that such a test is too much to ask, and must make religion difficult to adjust to practical life, let it be remembered, if this be so, the test of religion is not the practical life of our brute existence, but the practical outcome of our spiritual faculties. Then we answer in that fine sentence of a devoted champion of the newer faith, "In certain noble natures deep thinking and high feeling have become a necessity, and the only deliverance for them is in deeper thinking and in higher feeling."

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GLADNESS

BY

THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

Minister of All Souls Church, New York

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SERIES II

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## GLADNESS.

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“Be of good cheer; for I have overcome the world.”—JOHN xvi., 33.

WE ask ourselves to-day, What is this gladness of Christ, and what does it mean for us?

I suppose it means to different people as many different things as there are different creeds and different versions of the Christian faith.

I will only try to say what it all means to me as a Unitarian, and why the human, non-miraculous Christ holds the reverent affection, the loyal trust, of so many of us who worship the Father as the one and only God, and to whom the whole glory of the Son is purely moral and spiritual.

First, I rejoice in the perfect humanity of Jesus; his love, his faith, his power, and the uplifting influence his life and death, for so many centuries, have exercised upon mankind. I rejoice that it is all perfectly natural and in accordance with human nature, because what man has done man may do. That out of the darkness and cruelty of those ancient times such a day-star of hope could rise, is a perpetual hope for the world. Since Jesus was a man, I believe that his spirit in man is going to increase in the future even more than in the past. Far from feeling that the assertion of his humanity makes him less important,



I believe the contrary. I sympathize with the profound and witty saying of Lessing, that "after eighteen centuries of Christianity it is high time to try Christ." Who can deny it? Who can say that Christianity is a success? Who can think that, if Jesus were again born on earth to-day, he would be satisfied with the world, or even with the Church, that does so much (and yet so little) in his holy name?

It seems to me that Christianity and the Christian Church, if it be divine, is a failure. I cannot understand how a divine institution can work so badly. As I look around me,—nay, as I look within me,—and see how feeble is the spirit of Christ in the world, I feel convinced that that spirit is working on earth, not by miracle, but, like all else in human nature, by the slow and gradual operation of natural laws.

The orthodox view is that Jesus brings in a new heaven and a new earth, that he was Almighty God, and that by the stupendous miracle of his life and death the world has been redeemed.

Now, I say, in all due reverence, that such a doctrine proves too much. If God be a power who does not work by law, but by miracle, if by one unutterable miracle,—the incarnation,—he meant to change everything, and to make his bad, old world, his poor base creature, man, all over again, then I say again, in all due reverence, that the work of redemption ought to have been more successful. Thinking upon Christ as God and upon his Church as divine, not only does not strengthen my faith, but plunges me into hopeless doubt concerning the goodness of God and the future of mankind.

I rejoice, then, that my faith in Jesus as human makes me trust him; trust his faith in the Father; and trust his method of slowly redeeming the world by faith and hope and love, slowly overcoming evil with good, slowly purifying man's spiritual vision, slowly bringing all mankind into some future brotherhood of peace and service. To me, because he is human, he is the "bright and morning star" above a world which otherwise were dark.

Ages ago the sad question was asked, "What is man that thou, O God, art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" That question Christ has answered. That question the spirit of Christ, working in the hearts of men, is answering from age to age. No longer can man be scorned or despaired of. No longer can we say that there is no power in human society but selfishness and passion and cruel pride; for are not all men the brothers in blood of Jesus of Nazareth? Is not something of his spirit in all? And is not that spirit growing and triumphing, as the centuries pass? Is not this glad tidings, indeed?

I rejoice in such a faith in the human Christ, and I think that men who turn away from Christ do very commonly lose their faith in human nature. Such men, living, as we all do, in an un-Christlike world, where his message of love and peace are as yet but far-off angel music, as if from another sphere, are apt to feel that Christ's gospel is unreal and unpractical. This result is what our orthodox friends, who cling to the supernaturalism of the tradition, justly fear. If Jesus, they say, was only a man, why should we trust

him more than another? Did this amiable young Galilean really understand the whole compass of human nature? Was he not an idealist, a poet, a dreamer, living in a quiet corner of the world, and not knowing the terrible forces which were in Rome and Jerusalem, and which are now in Paris and London and in our great roaring, forceful modern world? Would he not have been as bewildered as we are in the face of these more complex conditions of human life?

Such doubts as these are far more terrible than the old theological questions; but the only way to meet them is frankly and honestly. It is perfectly true that Jesus lived in an age and time unlike our own. But, in claiming authority for Christ and studying the nature of that authority, we are not reduced to the barren alternative,—either he was God, and we believe him; or he was man, and therefore not to be believed.

For, when we speak of Christ, we are met by the fact that his words and life receive a universal response of grateful assent throughout the world. "Through him the thoughts of many hearts are revealed." His words come to us not upon his sole authority, but with the accumulated intensity of ages of Christian experience. We should not have had his words at all or any record of him, had it not been for the joy and the power which his truth imparted to many unknown, humble men. In all lands and under most varying conditions men have made a response to Christ.

Even if the name of Jesus were forgotten and our

Gospels, after centuries of neglect, were excavated and republished, can any one doubt that such a discovery would be the greatest event of the age it happened in? Can you doubt that the sublime figure of the Master, his tender love, his heavenly wisdom, his wonderful life and holy death, would touch and stir the very depths of innumerable hearts? What need to claim supernatural dignity for a wisdom which is heard so gladly by all men, because it is so profoundly human, so simple, so helpful, so inspiring?

Christ speaking to man, man answering to Christ with a fellowship of assent,—that is the story of his power from the beginning.

Let us say, and say boldly, that those who have not the spirit of Christ are none of his. It matters not what is your dogma about his rank in the universe, if your own heart and nature do not respond to his message. He publishes to us all the secret of blessedness. He shows us where our true life and joy must be found,—in loving service to man; in childlike trust toward God; in purity of heart, which is in the world, but not of the world, because man's deeper life is ever hidden with God, and not fed by bread alone. Now, this way of life, which is Jesus' way, this secret of blessedness, which is his secret,—in a word, love, faith, and spiritual freedom,—if these things do not commend themselves to your answering affection, because they are essentially lovely and strong and true, then no philosophy, no creed, can make you a Christian. You may call him Almighty God, and expect him to judge you at the last day, or

you may sentimentally admire him as one of the heroes and martyrs of our race; but, if you do not feel the fellowship of his spirit, then he has not yet reached you.

But just as Jesus won the hearts of his own disciples, though they were infinitely perplexed by his rejection of all titles of honor, won them by his grace and truth,—that is, by the persuasion of mighty love and clear wisdom,—so I believe to-day his sheep hear his voice and follow him, not because of claims and doctrines and Christologies, but because of the intrinsic attractiveness and power of his personality, and because his secret of blessedness commends itself to our deepest experience and desire.

Let me consider in detail how this authority and persuasion of Jesus are shown.

First, his tenderness. “He was touched with a feeling of our infirmities.” This is no learned rabbi talking to the people from a pulpit. He was a man among men, rejoicing with those who rejoiced, weeping with those who wept. He saw people suffering, and he had “compassion upon them.” He was with the sick, the afflicted, the poor, the outcast and despised, everywhere healing, blessing, comforting, uplifting, carrying with him in his very touch and, I imagine, in his gracious countenance a secret blessedness which people felt and were helped by. He drew the children to his side. He took them in his arms, and blessed them. To me it seems all as natural as it is attractive. It is the fulfilment, the perfect bloom, of qualities which are present in all good men. You all recognize, when you see it, this great loving-

heartedness of the Christ. Yet how rare! How the world represses and chills it down! How suspicion, envy, and worldly care dry up the "milk of human kindness"! Even when you have it in your heart, you cannot always show it; cannot, dare not, express the full sense of brotherhood that is in you.

Now, this humaneness, this tenderness, of Jesus, is really a great power in the world. The proud and strong may pass it by. Conventionality and luxury harden a man's heart to his brother; but, nevertheless, the commandment that "ye be kindly-affectioned one to another in brotherly love" meets with no protest anywhere. However hard, selfish, and cruel the world may be, everybody wishes it might be otherwise. Everybody recognizes Christ-like fulness of sympathy and love as the only true, the only happy life for men. For all our failure so to live we feel ashamed and apologetic.

When occasions arise which move men to fellow-feeling, such as some public calamity, or even a great festival like this Christmas-tide now upon us, whenever we feel one common wave of joy or sorrow possessing many hearts, we have therewith the sense that life is ennobled and our true humanity expressed. I believe that there is more and more in the world of this heart of Christ, the heart of pity and brotherly love. More and more the dark strongholds of human misery are being invaded by the sympathy, the wisdom, of all the best and noblest among us. We are in the age of humanitarianism and on the eve of yet greater triumphs.

All creeds and theologies aside, what better type

and hero have we than Jesus, of the humanitarian spirit? and is not this spirit the strongest power of our time?

Wonderful, indeed, is the progress of science! The physicians and surgeons, with whom the art and science of medicine is accomplishing such wonders, are magicians and wonder-workers, indeed; but what can mere science do for the healing of human bodies unless propelled by the spirit of love and pity in the community? The great physician and surgeon has behind him the hospital,—that creation of Christian charity and our completest achievement of human brotherhood.

The arts, inventions and explorations of our century are making the nations very rich and strong; but what are wealth and power without the spirit of brotherhood? Only a new source of danger to the State. The great problems of our time are moral problems. We may fill our land with factories and fill our cities with glittering palaces, but, if the spirit of Christ be absent, this wealth and power will not make the world happier, but only increase our envy, our pride, our luxuriousness; and, by "man's inhumanity to man," the good gifts of God in this fruitful land will be blighted and spoiled. What a testimony it is to the power of Jesus that in an age so unlike his own we still feel that the world's hope lies in just the direction he pointed out! What he said in simple Galilee to peasant and fisherman is just as true to-day in London and New York. The way of simple human love, which brings pity and healing to the suffering children of God, is an eternal gospel;

and we need never fear that any crumbling creeds or widening knowledge can ever remove us from that foundation which was laid in the love of Christ for the brethren.

But, if Christ is the hope of the world in all that concerns a nobler and happier life for man, how much more is he our guide and light in all that concerns man's life with God!

He lived, as we do, in an age of religious controversies and superstitions, an age of rabbis and philosophers, with their systems, their exposition of scripture, their fierce rivalries of sect and creed; but, in the putting forth of his word, he is divinely simple. The rabbis ask him for his authority. He refuses to give it. He does not speak to the theologians at all, but to the people; and, when he quotes Moses or the prophets, it is either to contradict them or to give a startling interpretation such as no one had thought of. To those for whom Jesus is God himself speaking to men, this setting aside the old and giving of a higher truth is another evidence of his divinity. They call it giving a "new dispensation or covenant," as if God should unsay what he once said. But, thinking of Jesus as human, this grand simplicity and freedom is only an evidence of his greatness and originality of soul. He had a religion at first hand. He taught men to worship God in the spirit, not by forms and traditions, but by the direct uplift of man's spirit to his heavenly Father, without temple or priest, but in love, childlike trust, and purity of heart. Jesus appears as the great emancipator of religion from bondage, superstition, and formalism. No sacrifice



but a willing heart! no other altar, no other temple! Forgiveness? Mercy? Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Be merciful, and you will obtain mercy. Become "children of the Highest" by doing the will of the heavenly Father, by imitating divine love, by taking part in God's great harvest-field, the world, with unwearied service. In the religion of Jesus, as given in his words and life, there is not one element that is not perfectly natural, simple, and free. Of course, it was too good to last. Superstition returned. Formalism, priestcraft, sacrifices, creeds, heresies,—all these came back, and were practised in the name of Christ himself; but, even in the deepest corruptions of Christianity, some tradition has been kept of the "simplicity of Christ."

As I look upon the warring sects and churches of our time, how I wish that we could all "come to Jesus"! What an emancipation it would be! It would bring the world back again to a simple child-like and practical faith.

I think the mission of the Unitarians, imperfect though our words and efforts may be, is to *realize Jesus*. We must try to save his memory and his influence from the unreality and the impossibility which surround it. By and by the great Christian community, which is so much disturbed by new science and new criticism, will find out that a century of Unitarianism has not been in vain, and that we have a message about Jesus which is positive and helpful. We say he loved mankind and he knew God as a Father, not because he had access to some sphere of knowledge beyond the clouds, not because he had

a superhuman and superangelic nature, but because he was a great human soul, his heart full of love and faith, and his spirit breathing the breath of God, as we his brethren might also live, if risen to the full stature of our humanity, as "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ."

Never more than to-day did the way of hope for religion lie along the line of a fuller sympathy with the faith of Jesus of Nazareth.

The world knows more now than it did in Palestine. But who by seeking can find out God? Science reveals the glorious order of the material world. I believe that is a contribution to religion. But, though science explains much, makes much look beneficent that once was terrible; though science robs the lightning of its wrath, stems the pestilence, stays the flood, and shows how storm and earthquake are part of a grand, harmonious, and fruitful world, — yet science does not reveal the Father.

So human society is stronger and richer than in Palestine in Jesus' day. Steam and steel cover the planet. We have worshipped reason, and in her name done many wonderful works; but men have not discovered the secret of happiness, and with a thousand useful and wonderful arts we have not abolished death or sorrow or sin.

In the deep things of God, in the deeper life of the soul, the world has not advanced beyond Jesus. Our science and our power do not make us clearer-sighted than he of any heavenly vision.

Our way to the Father is still through love like his, through patience like his, through the obedience

of dear children, whether it be through dark Gethsemane or pleasant Galilee. The kingdom of God is evermore within; and Jesus is not less, but more, "a prophet of the soul," in that his life is so far removed from all the outward conditions of ours.

If we had hoped to find God by intellectual subtlety and much philosophizing, the whole method of Jesus is a rebuke to that hope. If we had placed religious duty in our forms of worship or orthodoxy of belief, every page of the New Testament is a rebuke to that pretension.

The religion of Jesus is in the will and the affections. It is to do and to love, to pity and pray, to be thankful in joy, patient in trouble, and in all things to "work with God for man."

I know, of course, when once this practical attitude of the whole spiritual man is taken, there may be good philosophy and elaborated statements of belief that are useful.

But, first of all, the religion of Jesus is practical. It is a great act of the heart.

Let a man begin to live in the glad faith — perhaps a faith which he has not logically reasoned out — that this is God's world; that in all things natural and human there is a great gift of life from God, could we but take it lovingly; that there is a right and holy and excellent way of life for each one of us, could we but walk faithfully therein.

I understand the "secret of Jesus" to be that, if you take up your life with this glad faith in your heart, your faith will be confirmed by "signs following." You will do mighty works. By divine laws

of response and heavenly gift, it will be unto you "according to your faith," till at last "all things are possible to him that believeth"; for "he that asketh receiveth, and" to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Christian faith, then, is not an ingenious speculation. It is the most practical thing in the world. It is the joyous, the expectant and victorious attitude toward your life, as you take it up each day and each year.

Now, the wonder of it is that this mysterious universe does make a goodly response to this attitude of soul. To him that hath it shall be given still more. Live as in your Father's house, and more and more you find it is your home. Trust God, and he blesses you. Serve your higher nature, serve high and holy things, and, behold, angels will come and minister unto you. According to your receptivity of heart is the measure of the gifts of God. How simple the message! How profound! How satisfying! Can the religion of the nineteenth century get beyond this foundation-stone, which is the faith of Christ? Rather we are only beginning to appreciate its power, only beginning to feel its grandeur and its truth.

This practical faith is the irrefutable answer to all denial, to all doubt, concerning the Father's love and man's hope. You cannot live by doubt. You cannot live by your negations. You cannot work and be joyful in a barren desert of scepticism. Doubt and denial dry up and waste away the spiritual life.

But faith and love are powers. By their fruits ye shall know them. The world belongs to the men

who have the Christ-spirit of faith and love, for these alone can overcome the world.

So in these last days, as clearly and persuasively as ever, Jesus invites the world to try his way, his life, his truth. Plainly as ever his faith in God and man is justified by its fruitfulness and power. The mystery of his nature is the mystery of our humanity itself, and the mighty works of his faith are ever possible to those who walk in his faith. Follow after his ministry of healing, enter the fellowship of his freedom and spiritual joy, and you will share his victory, and find rest unto your souls.

THE  
WEEKLY EXCHANGE

A SERIES OF SERMONS

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP  
THOMAS R. SLICER

JOSEPH MAY  
THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

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THE PREACHER'S OFFICE

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP

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1893

TO THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 1871, OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL,  
HARVARD COLLEGE, THIS SERMON, PREACHED BEFORE  
THEM NEARLY TWENTY-TWO YEARS AGO, IS  
DEDICATED.

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N.B.—The members of the class requested the publication of this sermon. For this purpose, I gave it, also by request, to the editor of a bright and quite prophetic magazine, which was translated into the higher and unseen regions of Thought before it had found Time and Space enough to fulfil its earthly promise. *Resurgat!* I retain a few paragraphs, which were afterwards printed elsewhere. Possibly, the class may still like to glance a moment at the thoughts we thought together so long ago, although much light has broken out from the Word since that time.

S. R. C.

P.S.—A few copies, privately printed, were distributed some time ago.

S. R. C.

## THE PREACHER'S OFFICE.

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"I magnify mine office."—ROM. xi. 13.

SOME men think that the preacher's office is steadily waning, and that before long it will vanish altogether.

"In former times," such men say, "the priest was looked upon with a childish awe and reverence. A peculiar sanctity was supposed to abide in his person. He was regarded as a being apart from and above the generality of mankind. But now he is stripped of all these fine feathers. It is now seen that the priest is only one man among other men. No one now believes that he can give salvation in wine or water or oil any more than he can deal out damnation by bell, book, and candle. An excommunicated man sleeps none the worse nor dies the sooner for the sentence; and only fools nowadays fear the ban of synods, councils, elders, presbyters, or popes. There is still something to be done before mankind can be quite freed from the old yoke; but, as signs now are, it will not be very long before it will be shaken off altogether."

Let it be confessed at once that there is still some need of such cheap, rough-and-ready criticism as this. Let it be granted that the time has come for the clergy to be stripped of all artificial aids, of all imaginary powers. But the question remains, "When all these are taken away, will there be anything left?"



Let us see.

The preacher, stripped of everything but his manhood, has nothing left but his faith in God and man: his faith in God as the Infinitely Adorable One, the just and tender Lover of men's souls, the All-wise, the All-powerful, the All-perfect; his faith in man as the heaven-born child of a heavenly Father; his faith in Inspiration, or the beautiful interchange of thought and feeling between earth and heaven; his faith in the Holy Spirit, or in that Divine Force which, becoming man, renews the world; his faith in the sublime meaning of life here and the infinite significance of life hereafter. He has, in a word, nothing whatever to depend upon but his grasp of divinest truths and his power of speech, thought, action, magnetism, to bring them to bear upon the hearts of men. He has no resources to draw upon but those that Jesus had, when, all unknown as yet, he sat a youth by the shores of the Lake of Galilee, clothed only in the naked majesty of the Spirit. He can only do as Jesus did,—go about doing good, look out upon human sorrow with loving eyes, and touch human disease and misery with tender and reverent hands. He has no ground of confidence but that which Jesus had when he felt the Father's presence surrounding the world, and his blessing streaming down from heaven upon him and on all mankind. He has no weapons save those that Jesus used,—his hands of blessing, his eyes and lips of power, and his heart of flame. The only strength he has lies just where the strength of Jesus lay,—in his loving mankind with a Lover's love, in his joyous knowledge that all men are "one

race of noble equals" before God. The only allies he can call upon are God and the mighty company of godlike souls in earth and heaven. The only force he can draw upon is the sum total of the life force of the universe. The only blessing he can invoke is all the immensity of blessing that reigns in the infinite heavens. "All things that the Father hath are mine!" said Jesus: "therefore I said, He shall take of mine, and shall show it to you."

Instead, then, of feeling that we are called to an office from which the life is slowly dying, let us rather thank God that our lot has fallen on days like these, when, for the first time in eighteen centuries, the full glory of the preacher's office has a chance to shine forth, because now, for the first time, stripped of all adventitious aids, he is invited — nay, entreated — to tell out simply the word of God that he has received, and to believe as never before since the days of Jesus that there is force in that word. Before always some compromise; always some shibboleth to be first pronounced, some man-made creed to be first swallowed; always some noble doubt to be stifled, some noble affirmation to be kept back. But now brothers,—partakers of the heavenly calling,—it is nothing but our own unworthy filling of that calling, nothing but our own poverty of spirit, our own indolence, faithlessness, self-conceit, folly, or vice, that can prevent us from proving once more to mankind that the office is "the first in the world," and that the loftiest genius of the noblest souls can find the most splendid ambition fulfilled in filling it worthily.

The preacher, then, is emphatically the seer and

the sayer. He first sees the Infinite Beauty, and then tells it out to men in burning words.

Friends, in magnifying this our office, I tell you never to undervalue or disbelieve in words. Noble words are your chief weapons of offence and defence. The power of evil words all know and fear. Be it yours to prove the power of good words. "Solomon," say the Eastern doctors, "could at any time turn a desert into a garden, simply because he knew the great *name* of God." Words have been spoken in other days which inspired trust in God by sacred contagion, which cheered the mourner by the sight of grander worlds, which filled life full of hope and duty and joy, which pointed out the true way of meeting all events, which solved to man the riddle of his being. It is your holy office to utter such words, remembering ever in all humility that, when you utter them, it is not you that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

If, then, there are any that suppose that such words need no longer be spoken, that men are getting past the necessity of being instructed in high and heavenly things, that the sons of toil stand daily less and less in need of spiritual refreshment and provocation, and that, the more the world's progress goes on, the less the need will be, until it vanishes altogether, then I, for one, think that this is as absurd as to say that, because the world is getting more refined, and the general sense of the beautiful is steadily growing, *therefore* the calling of the artist will be less and less needed, and will before long vanish altogether. Of course, in this case, everybody sees that there will be more and more need of artists, to feed the awakened

sense of mankind with forms of beauty. A higher sense of beauty will, indeed, demand nobler artists; and a deeper sense of religion will demand a deeper interpretation of religion,—that is, will demand nobler ministers. That is a truth which we may well lay to heart. But imagine the absurdity of saying that the world is getting so scientific that it will soon need no scientific teachers at all. Everybody sees that the demand for educated teachers in science is daily increasing just because the world is getting more scientific.

One of the questions of the day is, “Will the coming man go to church?” If the church be indeed society organizing itself for the highest ends, be indeed that institution which binds men together in a holy brotherhood, pledged to hear the noblest words and to do together the noblest work, then the question resolves itself into this other: “Will the coming man have a soul or not?”

But there is another and a sadder side to the preacher’s office. He has not only to behold God’s glory and man’s nobleness, but man’s shame and sin also. He is to sing the one with all his might: he is to rebuke the other with all his might.

Now, in spite of much error and many shortcomings, it may be justly claimed that the Church, with the Bible in her hand, has, on the whole, always succeeded in keeping up the dread sense of the awfulness of wrong and the certainty of retribution, and has always won an essential victory over the sceptics in this regard; and why? Simply because the Bible did not make the retributions by predicting them. They

were first in nature, in the law of things; and keen-sighted Hebrew souls saw them there, and reported them. Get rid of the Bible, and you do not get rid of the law: you only get rid of the loudest-voiced herald of the law. Certain shepherds noticed that the wolves never came near the sheep-fold unless the dogs barked. So they killed off the clamorous dogs, thinking that, if they could only get rid of the barking, they would get rid of the wolves. But, lo! one dark night, the pack of hungry wolves rushed down from the mountains, sprang into the unguarded fold, and devoured flock, shepherds, and all.

The eternal sanctities abide, and, whether revered or not, will make themselves felt,—if not in blessing, then in bale; if not in righteousness and peace, then in wrong and war; if not in the coming in of the kingdom of God, then in the burning of cities, the killing of men, and the shrieks of women and children. The law vindicates its majesty, not only by the beauty and the harmony which follow from the keeping of it, but also from the ugliness and discord which follow from the breaking of it. Over and over again we look for God's mercy in the wrong place. We foolishly think that it is shown in his reluctance to inflict pain, or, at least, to keep on inflicting pain after a certain limited time: whereas it is just that pain, that anguish, that gnashing of teeth, which is the dread yet loving Angel of his Presence, which sternly, yet mercifully, refuses to allow, through all eternity, that evil should be as good.

No star in yonder host offers a safe asylum to

wickedness, nowhere does hate bring happiness, nowhere does self-seeking satisfy, nowhere does falsehood bless. Everywhere crime drags its own punishment behind it; everywhere sin stabs itself with its own hands. Now, it is just this inevitable sequence which, together with the gospel of loving help to needy souls, forms the hope of mankind. It is the persistence of God in the natural world which alone makes science possible; for, just because the laws of nature never alter, men learn them at last, and learn to triumph over them by obedience. Just because fire eternally burns, even babes at last learn not to put their fingers in it. Just because the law of gravitation eternally pulls down crooked walls, men learn at last to build straight ones.

It is the persistence of God in the moral world which alone enables us to learn the moral laws, and obey them. Just because God punishes wrong for ever and ever, men will at last learn not to do wrong. Just because the fires of hell eternally burn, men at last will learn to keep out of the flame. Ignorance forever errs; but that will not harm us, when knowledge is pleasant to our souls. Oppression will forever curse; but that will not harm us, when we have learned not to oppress.

Preach, then, no namby-pamby gospel of infinitely foolish good-nature in God and lazy acquiescence in salvation in man. Teach that in God's good world man has his fate put into his own hands, and that all human hells, individual and national, will last, here or elsewhere, just as long as man chooses to let them last.

A few months ago I was summoned to the death-bed of a woman who had always fought bravely for every good cause she knew. I shall never forget the last word she spoke on earth. I had just said how beautiful the heaven was to which she was going, when, with one dying spasm of energy, she replied, "Yes; but we shall have to work just as hard yonder to make it beautiful as we have had to work here." That was a brave speech to enter on a new life with. Yes: indolence sits still, and waits. Heaven is going to come and hell to vanish, if only it waits long enough. Indolence waits, and goodness waits, and God waits, and heaven waits; and hell from beneath cries, "There is room."

In your sacred office as spokesman for the indignant heart of man that hates wrong and prophesies its retribution, I ask you once again to believe in the might of the *words* God puts into your mouth as the sword of the Spirit that smites all iniquity.

"When God," says the Moslem, "wills the destruction of a wicked city, he sends the archangel Gabriel simply to cry against it." But the sound of that voice is enough. Instantly tower and battlement, street, palace, and temple, sink below the earth; and not a stone marks the place where the doomed city is buried.

Thirty years ago a giant City of Wrong stood, proud and defiant, in the very midst of this our land; but God sent his prophets to cry against it. And, after they had encompassed that city many days, lo! in one hour their voice was echoed from the throats of twenty million men; and the accursed City of Doom

sank instantly below the earth, and the pit swallowed it.

Upon you, too, sons of noble sires, the prophet's mantle has fallen. You, too, in the name of God, are to cry out against all falsehood and wrong. Do this bravely, and you shall learn that there is no surer instinct in the heart of man than that which rises up against seeming prosperous sin, and, in the name of God, prophesies its doom. This is to be your portrait:—

“His was the soul wounded to be, and ache,  
If truth, with error fighting, seemed to take  
Hurt in the battle; and he longed to shake  
All lies, with scorn, to pieces, and to make  
Falsehood, for sheer despair, her old heart break!”

To love the right, then, and witness for it; to hate the wrong, and prophesy against it,—that is your end and aim. Thus much, then, for the preacher's work. Now let us pass to his arms and equipment.

I. Passing as you do from these halls of learning, you doubtless go away stored with *science*. You have not neglected the priceless opportunity which a great university has given you. The treasures of its museums, its observatories, its cabinets, and its gardens, together with the thought of its men of science, have done much for you. You are at home with Nature. You know at least the *method* of finding out her secrets.

If not,—and I must remember that you are coming from a university which, though advancing with giant strides toward the ideal of education, has by no means reached it as yet; from a university in which the



united scientific knowledge of a Wyman, a Gray, an Agassiz, would not qualify a student for entrance into the Freshman Class of the college which their names adorn,— if not, then you must at once commence the study of Nature with poorer opportunities and smaller men to guide you. You have been near the table of the gods. A seat was proffered you, but you did not choose to take it. Now you must gather up the crumbs. Collar the first decent botanist you meet, and insist that in one hour he shall teach you to analyze one flower. In the next hour you will have analyzed two. Dog the steps of some geologist or astronomer, and make a beginning in the same way on the rocks and stars.

Never too late to mend! I once knew a man who, on the shady side of five-and-thirty, became disgusted at finding that, in spite of all the books he had crammed into his skull, he knew not a flower in the field, not a tree in the wood, not a fossil in the quarry, not a star in the sky. He doggedly set himself to work, with a reversed blessing on the wisdom of his educators, and found that a whole world of knowledge, thought, feeling, hope, poetry, aspiration, was opened to him, and that a whole new field of duty lay bright before him. It is a shame never to have called by their names the stars,— God's great object lesson, spread nightly over our heads, surely for the purpose of being seen. For the sense of infinity, for realizing the calm and awful safety of the universe, astronomy is the student's best teacher. I sometimes say that, if a man feels his imagination getting a little dulled, one sight of the great nebula in Orion

or of the great cluster in the sword handle of Perseus will make it all bright again. And now, when the analysis of the star-beam gives us to understand that we can claim for our dark earth the strictest kinship with all the starry host, seeing that the whole material universe is made of one stuff and is governed by one law, why, we wilfully defraud ourselves of the grandest thought of our age, if we deliberately choose to remain ignorant of astronomy.

For the sense of the vastness of terrestrial time we must go to geology. The majestic record of the Divine patience in creating, written by God's own finger on earth's tables of stone, can never be adequately read till our own eyes look on the record.

It is a shame not to be on speaking terms with our shy flower-friends, whose fragrance blesses us when borne on the breeze, and which sometimes creeps unawares into our sermons. We are all of us poets sometimes. Now and then we catch ourselves weaving the tint of autumn leaves into our discourse; and as we see them fall so silently in the woods, soft as sleep, they may tell us of the slumber God gives to his beloved, or of his kiss on the lips of the dead.

Chemistry teaches that man is master of the atoms, and that there is a way to make matter do just what man needs to have done. Anatomy and physiology should teach us a little, at least, of the way the living creatures, and we ourselves, breathe and live. 'Tis a little incongruous — is it not? — to have filled our heads for years with knowledge of things long passed away, and never to have devoted an hour to the study of the teeming brain that secreted it all, not even

with the wonderful bony brain-case that houses it so bravely, nor given a thought to the tremendous question, Whence came this marvellous structure, and what is its history? Why, then, do I insist that the preacher of to-day must earnestly study Nature, and master at least her great general laws?

I do so for many reasons.

First, because without such study the impression which Nature makes on the mind becomes duller and duller. The wonderful variety and majestic fulness of Nature must be reproduced in the brain. In the world of our thought, the bird must fly, the waters roll, the forest wave, the flowers bloom, the clouds must float silently overhead, the sun must shine, the twilight gather, the night fall, the stars must burn, and the deep immensity must enfold all in its silent bosom. To keep this sense of life undimmed in the brain, 'tis not enough to have poetic imaginings: we must study Nature lovingly, humbly, incessantly.

Secondly, I would urge science upon you, because it will teach you common sense about common things. One instance must suffice. High thought and an overloaded stomach are two things which God has put asunder and no man can join. If physiology and chemistry shall teach you nothing but "how to eat and drink," they will have earned your eternal gratitude. Science teaches us to treat our whole body with the gravest respect, and will, I trust, in about ten thousand years teach people that unventilated churches choke and kill the inspiration and very life of ministers, and put the congregation into a state of coma. Oh that the latter half of my life might be prolonged into that blessed era!

Thirdly, a little knowledge of science will teach you at least the virtue of silence when you are incompetent to speak. A very little astronomy will teach you to avoid running atilt against the nebular hypothesis, and flooring Laplace, Herschel, Spencer, and a host of others with a single blow of your rhetorical spear. A very little geology has taught the Church to say no more about six days; and it would take a very little physiology to teach you that the question of the origin of man's body is one which belongs to science, and not to religion.

This brings me to the last and grandest use of scientific knowledge to the preacher. It will give a sympathetic interest for and a genuine insight into the tremendous problems which the mind of man is meeting in this age, and which it is man's duty to try to solve, not to shirk. We cannot keep people from reading Huxley and Spencer and Darwin, and surely we would not if we could. But whosoever reads them rises from the book inside of the new age, with all its vagueness, its doubts, and its difficulties.

As this is one of the central questions of our time, it is needful to speak of it with as much precision as our narrow limits allow.

First, I discharge a brother's duty to you, when I declare my deliberate conviction that Science will be able to maintain against all comers her own account of the advent and development of organic life on the planet. I believe that she will eventually be able to prove that life has been developed out of life from the lowest round of the ladder of being to the highest; that not only has reptile sprung from fish, bird and

mammal from reptile, but that our own bodies have been developed as the head of the same grand series.

If you quote honored scientific names that still do not think thus, I ask, "Is it not because, just at this point, they refuse to think any further?" The negative force of the hypothesis has the same immense strength as the nebular theory has in astronomy. There is literally nothing deserving the name of science to put in its place.

I think, further, that this concession will lead to another. I think that Science will eventually win, with some modifications, in her account of the genesis in time, the birth on the planet of the faculties, qualities, virtues of man; that is, of the wondrous organs necessary for their manifestation. Thus, and not otherwise, the material garment which the soul wears on this Island of Time was slowly woven in Nature's mystic loom.

But the main point, perhaps, at least at present, for us as ministers, is to render to Science the things that are Science's. Hers are the facts; hers must be the methodizing of the facts and the final drawing of conclusions from the facts. What we, as ministers, have got to do is to possess our souls in patience, and to witness for our truth, which is also true. We can, however, at least teach mankind to shudder no longer at the wrong thing. Shudder as much as you please at the bestiality, the greed, the gluttony, the sensuality, of the lower animals; and, if you shudder at the same vices in man, too, you cannot shudder too much. But do not shudder at the beautiful mysteries of organization, which make the thoughtful man of sci-

ence wonder and adore. Do not shudder at the small remnant of a pointed ear in man, which seems to hint at its far-off origin in the strata below our feet. Shudder rather at the human ears which itch yet for filth and obscenity. Do not shudder at the perforation of the *humerus*, which still crops out in one out of a hundred men, which could once be seen in one out of four, which is universal among the quadrumana. Shudder, rather, at the terrible perforations which still pierce the hearts of ninety-nine out of a hundred men.

In one point of view, there is but little difference between the Old and the New Thought. The non-evolutionist says that one oak, elm, poplar, etc., was created, and that all their innumerable successors came by evolution; that two lions, two elephants, two dogs, were first created, and that their vast array of descendants came by evolution; that one man and one woman were first created, and that all their billion billion descendants came by evolution. The evolutionist asserts that all, including the one oak or elm, the two dogs or lions, and not the billion billion men and women minus two, but that all, including these two also, were created by evolution. Both agree that not a plant that grows, not an animal that crawls or walks or flies on the earth to-day, together with their ancestors for thousands of years, but has been created, lives, and dies wholly under the law of evolution. Since, then, both alike agree that the whole earth to-day and all things it contains are under the law of evolution, it becomes us well to learn that law, and see how it subtly pervades all that is without us and within us.

And if it should eventually turn out to be the fact that all things have been created by evolution,—that is, if evolution really turn out to be the way in which the Infinite Mind deigns to create his worlds,—would it not be comically presumptuous in you or me to declare that His plan was unworthy and contemptible, and that, like Alphonso of Castile, we could have given Him good advice? You will then, I believe, live to see the doctrine of evolution victorious all along the line; and, if this be so, your business as preachers will be to fill that idea full of God. You must show to men that evolution does not mean blind, dead matter doing the work of living force, but means God present in the atoms as Eternal Law and Force, means God creating his sentient creation through the consenting wills of all his creatures; inspiring the bird with love of beauty and of song, and so gently impelling the whole race of birds toward progress; inspiring the quadrumana with social affections, with tender care for the weak, the aged, the young of their number, and so laying deep and broad the foundations of human society, and organizing nerves which one day shall throb to human virtues. Man, in his blindness and conceit, has supposed that he alone is capable of heroism, of self-sacrifice, of progress. But one day it will be seen that all the ascents of life were first taken with pain, and that man has had a host of lowly benefactors, whose very names he has held in derision. Let a man look out upon this golden summer day,—all Nature quivering with life and joy,—and, if he cannot see God creating yonder elm-tree with its million leaves, I do not believe that

he will find the Creating Mind anywhere. Look within your hearts to-night: only a generous impulse toward a nobler life, only a glowing outlook upon a future that shall be one step nearer to the perfect day. That is all. But if you cannot, in that throb of your heart, see the Creative Mind entering into the world, conquering and to conquer, through your mind and heart, I do not believe that you will find the Creative Mind anywhere.

But we must proceed. I am forced reluctantly to pass over the influence which art and music, which linguistic, historical, and general culture should have on the mind of the minister, the high significance of which you all surely recognize; but, as time is short, and my one hour is fast waning, I pass on, to urge upon you, in the second place, a broad, accurate, sympathetic study of the Bible.

II. The Bible is the best used and worst abused book in the world. Millions of men and women, guided only by the sacred instincts of the heart, have found among its thousand sayings the one word of God suited to their need. I find that the thumb-marks on our mothers' Bibles are admirable guides to the grandest inspirations. Leviticus may, in theory, stand on a par with the Sermon on the Mount; but the dog's ears of the one, and the clean, white pages of the other, show what the verdict of the heart is. Tens of thousands, on the other hand, have been deeply injured by doctrines drawn directly or indirectly from its pages. The reason is plain. It is the only grand book of antiquity which is in the hands of the wise and the foolish alike. It is a tremendous



tonic. It stimulates or it maddens, according as it is used wisely or foolishly.

It is our business, then, to witness for it against its foolish friends and its equally foolish enemies.

We are to show its foolish friends that the highest sign of belief in its revelation is to put ourselves into the self-same attitude that its writers took,—the attitude of open souls, expectant of the heavenly vision; that the grandest lesson that Jesus himself can teach us is the way to throw open wide all the gates of the spirit within us, that the King of Glory may come in.

We must say, then, to its foolish friends: You say that the Bible is inspired. It is nobly true. But the great proof that it is *inspired* is found in the fact that it *inspires*. Once, then, shut up, as you do, all inspiration within the lids of the Bible, and the Bible itself has lost its meaning. It becomes at once a mere museum of spiritual antiquities,—a curious record of past psychological anomalies. It utterly ceases to be the living witness to the noble words which men, God-inspired, have spoken before, and, God-inspired, may speak again. It points the way to inspiration, it is true; but there is no inspiration to point to. It invites pressingly to communion with God, but no communion with God is to be had. The prophets are there, but there only as the embalmed mummies of a race forever passed away. The apostles are there, but there only as the skeletons of those mighty inhabitants of primeval seas which are found far up in the mountains, but from which the tide that once uplifted them has receded forever. Jesus is there; but the mighty meaning of his words has

dwindled to nothing, and the bending heavens of his promise bend to man no more. His exhortation to the disciple to be as his master seems like wanton mockery, and his invitation to follow him a taunt and insult to those who have no feet to walk with. The angels are there, but never a wing floats down in blessing to the earthly atmosphere. The stern-closed heavens send no message more. God is there, but the dwellers in the skies now absorb all his regards. The All-pitying Eye turns never a glance on those who need its benediction most. Earth and her children are alike orphaned of their Father, and the once present Spirit has receded to an infinite distance.

If, then, all inspiration was closed when the Bible was at last completed, it was worse than useless to have written it at all. 'Tis like the fabled cup offered to Tantalus in the Tartarus of old, that forever fled from his lips, but whose very presence mocked his raging thirst.

If such people make answer to this appeal, "Ah! but in its pages you will find blessed directions, which will show you how to obtain salvation from the wrath to come," the brave reply to that is: "Then the Father himself does not know what we want. It is not safety, but God himself, that we are seeking."

But more. If this dogma be true, then we boldly say that the writers of the Bible are themselves found false witnesses before God; for the whole burden of their cry to man is to come to God, and drink in his inspiration. Nay, more. They do not simply speak of the possibility, not even of the privilege, but of the duty of inspiration. They warn all nations that,

if any people find that among them there is no prophet more, then that people's business is to sit in sack-cloth and ashes before God, and with prayers and tears inquire of him for what sin he has hidden his face from his people.

I have dealt with this great question only on the side of feeling. I have altogether left out of view the tremendous injury thus done to the reason. "If you hit me so hard," said Epictetus, mildly, when his master was beating him furiously, "you will certainly break my leg." "There, I told you so," he added as quietly, when the result triumphantly vindicated his foresight. The master's folly maimed the best servant man ever had.

"If you hit me so hard," says Truth, mildly, to the Church, "you will hurt me so, that I can no longer work for you." The Christian Church, by insisting upon an absolutely infallible word of God, from which all errors — errors physical, moral, spiritual — are excluded, has hit the truth so many hard blows that it is almost a wonder that that noble servant of man has not been driven out of the Church altogether.

This, then, is the mighty question which is put to our generation; and our generation must answer it: Is the gate of inspiration thrown open to genius and to toil, to faithfulness and self-sacrifice, to love and ardor and divine longing? or, unlike all other departments of God's world, does it open wholly by favor? or, rather, did it once so open, and is it now closed forever, so that the noblest human energies must seek other channels of activity?

Young Genius stands gazing with longing eyes

upon the masterpieces of religious art, painted by inspired hands on the life-canvas of history. Is it allowed to him also to paint, or is it blasphemy even to harbor the thought that he can? "But let us clearly understand you," says some one. "Do you really mean to say that every one can have as much inspiration as Isaiah, as David, as Paul had?" No more than I mean to say that every child who learns to draw can become a Raphael, who learns his notes can become a Beethoven. Eighteen centuries have passed since Paul ascended to God, and the ages still wait for his peer. Such mountain heights of the soul are rarely reached. But what I do mean to say is this: that it would be a heavy incubus on an artist's ambition if he were systematically taught that the genius of art had indeed inspired the past, but frowned down upon the present; that the best that artists could do, nowadays, would be servilely to copy the old masters, heedless of their inspiration, and reproducing fac-similes of their very defects.

What I do mean to say is this: that, if all musical composers were henceforth taught that it was impious even to imagine it possible to obtain original musical conceptions, if they were sternly forbidden to study the kings of song for the purpose of finding out their secret and striving to sing as they did, if they were only allowed to copy bar after bar of the great originals, and strew this piecemeal among their own second-hand stuff, the world might bid farewell to the glorious hope of seeing new Beethovens and Mozarts on whom the mantles of the masters of song might fall.

And what I do mean to say is this: that just so long as it is taught in the churches that it is blasphemous even to hope to have any new and original experience in divine things, to have, in a word, any immediate present contact with the Supreme Mind and Will,—just so long will second-hand religion give to men stones which are not bread. No mighty epic of the higher life will master the souls of men with the harmonies of heaven. Mediocrity will mark the pulpit, and a low style of living will content the congregation. No great deeds will be done for God. No stalwart blows will be struck for man. None will ever dream of loving his kind with a lover's love. No grand reforms will be inaugurated, no religious discoveries be made; and men, defrauded of the sight of the grand worlds which inspired speech could have opened to their view, will disconsolately act as if there were no real heavens at all.

We thank God heartily that he is nigh unto all that call upon him, that he who feeds the ravens supplies the common needs of every soul, that the lowliest pilgrim can lean on God's staff. But we pray God to send us men and women filled with a great, insatiable thirst after God, who, not content with the tame, flat landscape in the midst of which they were born, with which dull souls seem satisfied, long to sail over undiscovered seas of truth, to find new continents of knowledge, of wisdom, and of love. I would have youthful religious Genius know that it has all God's universe for range, all God's truth to discover, all God's being to interpret. I would have young Genius unable to sleep, Themistocles like, for the trophies of

these ancient heroes of the soul. Gazing on the masterpieces thus painted, I would have him say, as Correggio did when gazing on Raphael's great work, "I, too, am a painter."

But turn we now to the foolish enemies of the Bible. I urge upon you the duty of gaining a sympathetic insight into the great events in the Bible, of learning how to place the history of Israel in its true position in relation to universal history, and of making a resolute, painstaking, and continuous effort to enlighten men in this regard,—largely because, if you do not manfully face the subject, others far less competent will. You cannot keep the topic out of men's mouths. It is the religious question set for this generation to solve, once and forever. Thanks to the unremitting labors of a host of fearless, earnest, self-denying scholars, the difficult task of reconstruction has been fairly accomplished; and we are now in a position to answer most of the questions that can be answered, and to say candidly when no answer is to be had. But, if knowledge refuse to teach, then ignorance and blatant self-conceit will undertake the task. That there is urgent need of light on this side of the question, suffer me to show by one or two tragicomic examples.

"Oh, you should have heard our minister to-day!" said an enthusiastic hearer. "He gave such a splendid sermon on the Old Testament. He showed up the old prophets, and proved that they were not a bit better than we are." That minister ought to have been deeply mortified at such praise as that. If the hearer had said, "It was a glorious sermon: he

seemed to penetrate into the very heart of the great inspired souls of old, and so revealed to us what greatness is possible to man, when he surrenders himself to the inspiring spirit of God," that would have been praise indeed. If this is the result of half-culture, what will be the result of no culture at all?

"You should have heard Mr. Post-mortem Catch'em, the great lecturer, last night," said a progressed shoemaker to me one Monday morning. "Didn't he give it to old Moses! Wasn't he great on the quails!" Alas! we have not gained much, if we are to exchange even the old mechanical theory of inspiration, which at least kept alive its reverence for something great it could not understand, for such cheap criticism as this. Imagine the great soul of Moses, his mighty achievements, and his yet grander purpose caricatured in such a fashion! The object of true criticism is to give us a true picture of any epoch which it analyzes; and in great epochs, when men's souls are lifted above themselves, its highest purpose is to give a living picture of the heroism evoked, and trace the sources of the power that evoked it. Take these very quails, the manna, the water flowing from the rock, if you will; and the most trenchant criticism, if it be only high-toned and sympathetic (and, if it be not, it is no true criticism at all), cannot fail to see something beautiful and touching in the story of the child-like faith of the Israelitish wanderers in the desert, which saw God's own bounty in all the gifts of nature, in the water welling up amid a thirsty land, in the manna-dew dropping from the trees, or the weary birds alighting on their tents at night.

“I have been an Orthodox minister myself, and preached all that trash once, and believed it, too,” said the most tremendous iconoclast I ever met. “But I came out the other side, and now I try to persuade everybody I can not to believe a bit of the humbug. Why, only this afternoon, I heard an old woman say that the Bible was to her a blessed book, that she anchored all her hopes upon its promises, and so on. And I just read to her about the killing and quartering of the Levite’s concubine in the Judges, and asked her how she liked that.” I have no doubt that the poor old woman was perfectly stunned. But was it not a pity that a man so resolute should not have endeavored to find out the real truth about these things, instead of vanquishing an old woman in a combat so unequal, as far as lungs at least were concerned?

Take, if you please, this very instance, picked out as the very worst our iconoclast could find. What are the points of the story? A nameless Levite passes with his wife through a town in Israel. A lewd crowd gathers, and inflicts a mortal injury on the poor, helpless woman. Well, in that age of the world, it is perhaps safe to say that in no other land but Israel would the deed ever have been heard of again. Such things were only too common. But in Israel—at a time, too, of anarchy and confusion, when the tribal bond was strong, and the national one stretched almost to bursting—such a deed, says the narrative, was felt to be dreadful enough to draw down the vengeance of Heaven on the whole land, if it remained unpunished; and the whole nation delib-



erately resolved on a bloody civil war rather than be recreant to its highest duty. The deep sense of the awfulness of wrong which the tribes then felt was akin to that which rose to power among ourselves but ten years ago. In reality, the moral elevation of the story seems altogether too high to be possible at such an epoch.

These examples must suffice to describe "how not to do it." "How to do it" is the next question. Confessedly, it is one difficult of solution. It takes little knowledge, preparation, or fitness to make a slashing critic of the school of Thomas Paine, who wrote his first criticisms without any Bible by him. It was inconvenient, as he confessed, but, after all, not very important. It takes original genius of a high order, years of previous literary training, indefatigable study of the Hebrew literature and character, with a deeply religious and most sympathetic spirit,—and, added to all this, a life-long devotion to the task,—to make a history of Israel as true scholars conceive of it. The utmost, then, that can be done here is to hint at the method.

It must be, then, chiefly positive rather than negative, constructive rather than destructive. It is a just criticism on Colenso's honest and manly work that, while he proves incontestably that the Hebrew annalists of the Pentateuch were by no means good mathematicians,—that, if he had examined them, they would certainly have been "plucked" in a Cambridge examination,—he does not even attempt to give us what we most want; namely, a true picture of the grandest religious event in ancient history, when, for

one heroic moment, a horde of ignorant slaves were uplifted by the faith and hope that dwelt in one great heart to the height of doing and daring all things for a religious idea. It is, undoubtedly, part of your duty to show that the Pentateuch is made up from a thousand fragments written by many hands. But, that done, the main business lies still before you. Show the deep value of those fragments to the religious history of the race. Show that even the barren lists of names in the most ancient genealogies are precious relics from a world drowned under the waves of time. Criticise, if you will, the walls of Jericho, falling down before the hosts of Israel; but substitute, at least, for that poetry the bare prose,—that, somehow, the haughty city's proud walls were scaled by wildly inspired men, in whose hands were weapons a warrior would have scorned, but in whose hearts burned the belief that Jehovah was among them. "Why did you attack that whole troop alone?" said Khalid, the Moslem, to Derar. "Because they came to meet me, and I was afraid that God should see my back in the day of battle." If you see grandeur of soul in that reply, see it also in the spirit that kindled the hearts of the armies of Israel.

The song of Deborah is semi-barbarous in its vindictive triumph. Yes; but, all this being granted, the highest word yet remains, which is this: that three thousand years ago, when the twelve tribes of Israel were fast sinking into hopeless slavery, when cowards hid themselves, and when brave men, in their prudence, kept silence, and made no sign, then Deborah, a weak woman, arose, to be a mother in Israel,

and with wild eye and hand uplifted to heaven swore, by the Lord of hosts, that Israel should be free!

But enough of these scattered hints. Our main effort must be given to tracing the evolution and growth of the spirit of prophecy in Israel, through wild-eyed Deborahs, weird Elijahs, rapt Isaiahs, till at last Jesus takes up the strain, and pours forth from his heart the lyric, passionate song of the blessed life. Thenceforward the waters of life flow into all lands. To us, inheritors of a true apostolical succession, it is given to proffer this celestial water to thirsty lips; and the main effort of our lives must be to be so equipped, so ready in body and soul, that we also, as true sons of the prophets, when God calls for a messenger, may be able at once to answer, "Here am I: send me."

But to do this requires more even than the open vision, the trained capacity for inspiration. The one thing needful is utter consecration. This is our last word.

Long ages ago, when God was building his America, it fell on a day that all the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea were gathered together before the Lord. And the Lord said, "Who will go up, and build for me a Florida promontory, to shelter my warm tropic sea from the waters of the icy north?" And all the creatures, assembled together before the Lord, answered, "We will go up." So the elephant tore up the trees, and the rhinoceros and the bear brought huge stones from the rock, the eagle and the vulture brought leafy branches in their beaks. And so the barrier was

builded, and the mighty whales covered it with sand and slime. But the Ocean rose in his might, and laughed them to scorn; for in one night his waves dashed the barrier to pieces. And, when again the assembly was gathered, the creatures stood silent and ashamed before the Lord. But in the midst of that silence arose a tiny voice, so small and weak that none but the ear of the Lord, who bends himself to catch the prayer of his smallest creatures, could hear. And the voice was the voice of the Corals; and they said, "O Father, we will arise and build." And the Lord blessed them; and he said, "Go and prosper, for I have delivered it into your hands." The Corals were weak and poor. Naught could they give, save one only gift: they gave themselves. And, lo! the Lord accepted the gift; and Florida was builded!

Brothers, however weak and poor we may be, at least we can give *ourselves*. Without self-consecration there may be talent, culture, ay, even genius,—every admirable furniture, save the one thing needful. Without that there can be no grand success, no life spent in blessing, no giving up all and following; without that, no power to say, "Receive the Holy Ghost"; without that, no guided life, no blessed peace; without that, no miracle, no marvel of the heavenly grace, no angels ascending and descending; without that, no full assurance, no triumphant departure, no "Well done, good and faithful servant!" as the crown of glory set by God's own hand upon your forehead; without that, no turning many to righteousness, and shining as the stars forever and ever.

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BY

JOSEPH MAY

Pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia

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## PHILLIPS BROOKS.

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“I have made myself the servant of all.”—1 COR. ix. 19.

THESE recent days have been a period of profound sorrow for the people, it is hardly an exaggeration to say, of our whole country,—indeed, of the English-speaking world. In its source and character the affliction has been almost unique. He whom we mourn was not of official station, not a political idol, not a military hero. Yet for none of such, in our time, save for Lincoln only, has there been grief so wide-spread, deep, and disinterested.

*A man of religion* has suddenly been snatched away in the full maturity of his powers, at the zenith of his rare influence, just when his usefulness was greatest. He had, indeed, surpassing gifts. He had just been made a high dignitary of his Church. But neither his talents nor his position gave him his marvellous hold upon men of all sects and no sect,—and evoke their tears. It was the qualities of his heart, the beauty of his life, the felt preciousness of his services to mankind. He was loved, he was trusted, he is mourned, almost with the intensity of personal affliction, by thousands who had never seen him, because he was good, did good, and made men good. Admired

• Preached Sunday, Jan. 29, 1893.



for his gifts, he impressed himself upon his contemporaries not chiefly by his genius, but by his character and his life.

I do not need to name him. Your thoughts are full of him. Phillips Brooks is dead!

He was more than good. By temperament an individualist, the genuineness of his traits, the certainty of his faith, the fervor of his religious and moral sentiments, combined with the peculiar wants of the transition-time in which he has lived and striven,—old foundations lapsing, new sanctions shaping themselves but slowly,—to make him a religious *leader*. Multitudes have reposed in him with something of the trust the Christian world has felt (and he, of all men, felt) for the Master who was his inspiration, his life, his guide, his model. We have other great preachers,—though none so great as he,—but he stood pre-eminent as an example of utter, guileless, self-abandoning *religiousness*.

He was not merely morally upright and beautiful, Christ-like in the benevolence of his heart, the purity of his life, the transparency of his character. Above all this, he had the Christly vision, the sure intuition which Jesus had, of the verities of the spiritual world.

In the following such a man has had, we see in these modern days what it was eighteen hundred years ago gave the Master he loved his magnetic power, made common people hear him gladly, and enshrined him forever in the world's heart.

There is no irreverence in the comparison, although this disciple would have shrunk from it as Jesus did when he was but called "good." Let us, who are

seeking to vindicate the generic dignity of humanity, not fear to bear witness to its high manifestations in other noble examples than that of Christianity's sacred man. For a strain yet loftier, yet more inspiring, would have been added to this great apostle's impressive utterances, could he but have seen, unqualified, that truth which I believe will be the inspiration of a near-approaching day, which the adoring admiration of Christians for their Lord has, by its limitations, hidden from the world's vision so long,—that it was not a thing *exceptional* in Jesus, but the humanity which is forever divinity, that made the holy man of Nazareth what he was; that every franchise of the spirit which he enjoyed is open on terms absolutely equal, and in virtue of their nature, to all his brethren; that it was in him only the truth, the common universal *truth*, known, felt, accepted in its fulness, working its full effect, that made him what he was.

The same truth has made all other holy ones what they were. It has made many a humble, unnoticed soul a vivid illustration of its power. It made this great man and preacher what he was.

Alas, dear friends, why is it so obscured in most of us, overlaid with worldliness, selfishness, sense, that we cannot find it in ourselves, and so, when we see it in some holy child of God, we think it abnormal, something strange, a miracle?

Thank God for each new incarnation of His spirit in men like our brother; which ought to open our eyes to understand every other saint of olden or later time, or foreign land; make us rejoice in them all as illustra-

tions of the native immortal quality of manhood, witnesses to our high calling; and touch our hearts to be like them, to give scope to the working in us of the same eternal principle of truth, which, if we but would, would make us, also, what each child of God should be, the visible incarnation of the one eternal spirit.

Phillips Brooks has been the symbol of *religious faith* to his generation. *This* is what gave their searching, persuasive, quickening power to his words. Simple they were in themselves, though God had given him the genius of the orator, too; yet the words were very simple, artless even. He was no mere orator. He practised no effects. He studied no methods. He disdained all attempts to play upon men's feelings by the skill of the rhetorician. Take away the one secret of his life, and he would have been but a common man, of fine gifts surely, but no prophet of a people, holding them to him by an attraction that was magnetic. His generation has clung to him because he knew the truth of God, accepted it, and gave it scope in his own soul. When he spoke, men felt it. "Thou" — thou, too — "hast the words of eternal life," they said to him.

This fulness of spiritual life in Phillips Brooks expressed itself in his *benevolence*.

In that, too, he was Christ-like. It was all-comprehending, and simple, childlike, engaging, making him not only unceasing in his goodness to the poor and suffering, but tender and gentle in every circle, thoughtful of small services, punctilious in the lesser duties of social life, which he idealized by the sincer-

ity he put into them. He was a gentleman by birth and the fortune of good breeding; but it was the golden vein of truth and love that made his manners so gracious, his voice so sweet and moving. Where Brooks went, purity went, kindness went, pity went, whether into the elegant homes of the rich or the humble abodes of the respectable poor or the squalid haunts of misery and degradation. He never *preached*, in the mean, didactic sense, even in his pulpit; but, wherever he went, he preached. By the eloquence of character, by his faith in man as well as in God, by his love and hope for every man, he testified to the beauty of truth, of purity, of virtue of every kind.

He was so true, so entirely pure, so natural, he could not be *ascetic*. He loved this world, so full of beauty, joy, pleasure as it would be if only all would enjoy it as God meant. He was rich, and he loved rich things. He enjoyed that element in life which we call luxury. But to him it was not luxury, it was the bounty of Providence, which such a one could use and profit by, be refreshed, enlarged, and strengthened by, and made a more efficient servant of God. For it did not betray him. He loved this beautiful world, and was at home in it, exactly as Jesus loved it and was at home in it, because its good things were, after all, no part of his real life, no essential of his real needs,—because his real life was of the spirit.

He was a magnificent example of the physical man, large, strong, hearty; but there was nothing of the animal man about him. In worldly places he carried virtue, he shamed excess, he bore religion with him. His temperament was cheerful, but the habit of his

mind seemed grave. The serious word was always ready. He could not speak and not reveal the high, exacting purpose of his life and thought.

He lived, I think, as such men do, in a certain *isolation*. He always seemed a little apart from his fellows; but removed by a little interval, not through defect of sympathy, only by the holiness of his mind. He was fully in this world, but he was of that other and deeper world.

Yet, descendant of a line of Puritans, Brooks was not in the least a Puritan. He saw virtue in the motive, the spirit, not in the outward fact, of which the Puritan has always made too much. I cannot but point out his resemblance to his Master in this respect, also. The Pharisees — Puritans of their day — called Jesus a wine-bibber and a glutton. We know how false and shallow such an interpretation of his life was; that he bore among the amenities of this world no glutton's heart, but the same divine superiority to the outward, which gave him the full franchise of the temporal, because his real life was of the eternal.

What a pity we cannot all so use and enjoy this beautiful world! Till to-day we do not know how beautiful it is, because we look upon it with the eyes of sense. We enjoy it with greedy animal hearts, finding not in it its divine meaning as the basis, the setting of our true life; and so we abuse it, and it recoils on us, misleads, betrays, degrades us.

The lesson of saintly lives is twofold, my friends. They teach us the spiritual; and, if ever we truly know that, we shall also know the temporal, the

earthly, the physical, and see it glorified, radiant *also* with the smile of God, the meaning of God in it.

Our brother's love for men was of the same quality and strain. He saw in them not the earthly, but the spiritual. Every man was his brother, the child of God, to be awakened, purified, lifted up, poor or rich, upon the same plane of religious, manly living, where he could endure want and hardness or trust himself to enjoy, because dedicated to service, to the spirit.

No man ever despised worldliness more heartily, was more visibly superior to it. The idol of the fashionable class for the grace and richness of his personal traits,—the littleness of fashion, whether in society or the church, the pettiness of mere ecclesiasticism, aroused his contempt and scorn, as the misery of the unfortunate awoke his pity.

Recall the spirit of the times a generation ago. Recall how the lovers of their kind in that day were despised and rejected when they stood up to claim that men with black skins were men, with men's rights, children of God all and fully, though enslaved through half our nation and oppressed through all of it. Recall the spirit of this Christian city, which ostracized them, shut them from public comforts, from the advantages of education. Recall the spirit of the Church, of his own Church, in whose pulpits so rarely a voice was raised for our humble brothers of another race. Remember his youth, still but a boy almost, and that he dared fashion and popularity, and from his pulpit Phillips Brooks spoke the bravest, faithfullest, tenderest words for the slave, and for the black man of our own streets; the severest condem-

nation for those who robbed them of their manhood in the South, and for those who oppressed them at the North — (as still we do, my friends).

The worldly in his pews were offended, as they were in our own when similar Christian words were spoken from our desk. Then God be thanked for the gifts He had given His young servant! To God he gave back all the glory when the power of his eloquence defended him, and made him indispensable in his place. "I make no sacrifice," he declared. "If some go, others come and fill their places." Of another preacher, less highly-gifted and influential, though not less true, who could not breast the tide, but saw his flock desert him and his livelihood imperilled, "He makes the sacrifice. He is the martyr," he said.

No more could Phillips Brooks be a sectary in religion. Devoted to his own Church, he was always larger than his Church. He was divided from no other servant of God by his loyalty to her. He could endure no definition of Christianity which regarded the shell, and not the substance.

He judged men by their spirit, not by their creeds. He would stand in other good men's pulpits. He would welcome true men of other sects to his. Oh, what an influence for good in his great Church is taken away, just as his sphere and opportunity had been so widely enlarged! He was to have gone into all the parishes of his diocese, to carry that large, tolerant spirit, to teach younger men that religion is ever greater than its institutions or its sacraments, to rebuke his coevals for the pride and exclusiveness which exalt particular modes of organization, opinion, wor-

ship, the mint and anise and cumin of outward methods above the love of God, the love of man, the love of truth.

Who shall take up his mantle in his great and growing Church, and stand to see that the work he had begun in her goes not back because God had some higher service for him to do in heaven?

Some of his fellow-churchmen dreaded him for his breadth of view and feeling; and some of us, for these, would have claimed him as a Unitarian. Well, he was Unitarian in his assertion of mental freedom, in his superiority to narrow lines of sect, his wide sympathies, his more than tolerance for all sincere and earnest thought.

But, in justice to him, even to limitations which to him were dear, let us bear witness that he did not, in his cardinal opinions, his Christian theory, stand where we stand. The divergence might seem to some narrow, but to him it was radical and essential. He was too honest, too fearless, to have stayed where he was, had it been otherwise.

Phillips Brooks never let go the peculiar and, as I have called it, limited mode of religious faith which characterizes the so-called "evangelical" Christian. I have never seen any words of his which retracted or hesitated as to that interpretation of the nature, endowment, and office of Jesus which is distinctive of the orthodox position. He was not merely a supernaturalist of the Channing type. He was a full, earnest, devout believer in the *supreme* divinity of Jesus. He never hesitated — what to me is temerity almost profane — to call Jesus, as the Christ, by the



awful name of Deity. All his thought was deeply grounded in this interpretation. Christ to him was God in the flesh; not merely as God is spiritually in us all, but peculiarly, particularly, as a unique incarnation of the divine being in the one man, Jesus. Christ, the God-man, was the essential link between men and God. He was the indispensable bridge, over which men must pass to God. I am not sure that, through his love of man, this preacher was always strictly consistent in all his words and acts. Few who maintain the orthodox view nowadays are consistent. They are apt to be larger than their creeds. But certainly, in his own faith, to his own soul, this conception of the supreme, unique divinity of Christ was cardinal, essential, and a living truth, by which Brooks lived. It would be cruelty to him to question this now.

Yet he was not a theologian, as Jesus was not. As of the one, so of the other, the emphasis of thought, of feeling, was religious and ethical. Had Brooks been a man of an intellectual cast, he might have wavered in his faith. I presume he was sometimes, in these days, perturbed by the discussions which passed about him; but he did not enter much into them. The energy of his mind did not expend itself in theological reflection to the unsettling of his own personal mode of faith and feeling.

What would I not give,—feeling that that limited form of faith is a *barrier* between men and God, the infinite spirit; to the truest understanding of human nature, and, in particular, of Jesus himself; a *barrier* to the profoundest, most inspiring religion,—had this

inspired soul seen what I believe to be the fact, higher and greater, the absolute truth;—had he so seen the *divinity of every man* that he could not have permitted himself to doubt that, in that which to him was the highest example of the incarnation of God, the humanity was still normal and the incarnation normal; that Jesus, howsoever he towered above other men in the *degree* of his spiritual endowments, was in *nature* and in his relation to God no *exception*, but the unqualified type of humanity; that all the thought which has *particularized* him, and the incarnation in him, has been in derogation of the highest of all truths of being,—this of the universal generic divinity of mankind; that in particularizing him, as the metaphysics of the Church has done, his race, his brethren, have been discrowned, their heritage denied, their supreme hope obscured to their eyes, their aspirations checked and lowered and chilled!

How would not our great preacher have illustrated this high truth, this final truth! How it would have glowed on his lips! How it would have gone forth, like a new revelation, to let in the light of God upon the dark places of men's faith!

When shall we have a man of such gifts, who shall feel as Brooks felt and see yet more clearly? Our age waits for him, the apostle of divine humanity, the prophet of God in all men.

But to this grand soul, whom we mourn, the highest vision was denied. We must still wait for the Chrysostom, who, filled with this sublimest truth, shall interpret it in forms of beauty to our age, and carry it, on the wings of eloquent, persuasive words, into

the sin-laden, weary, anxious, longing, aspiring hearts of men.

But, while he was as sincere in his doctrinal limitations as in his positive religious intuitions, Phillips Brooks was certainly too great, too broad, to value essentially any narrow distinctions in opinion or any mere methods in religious culture or forms in worship. No doubt he was thus exposed to misconstruction both without and within his own Church.

In fact, he was so genuinely devout that to some he seemed not justly to value the outward acts of worship, so necessary to natures of a lower strain. All forms and modes were distinctly to him symbols only; and, as was strikingly the case with Jesus, the energy of his religious impulse required for its satisfaction those benevolent *duties* in which a man draws into that *practical* union with God, as His colaborer, to which in worship he but aspires. Only in joint service with God does the true worshipper realize finally that for which he has prayed. Deeply devout, but not pietistic, the religious zeal of Phillips Brooks expressed itself in that eagerness for the uplifting of men to a nobler life which has been called the enthusiasm of humanity. This breathed nobly through all his preaching. It moulded the fashion of his life. It drew all men into the circuit of his universal benevolence. Whatever was for the welfare of mankind, whatever would relieve suffering, reform the habits of men, the customs of society, awoke his ardent and practical sympathy. In works of mercy he was incessant. His private life was as lovely, with its tissue of secret charities, as his public career

was noble, with its bold assertions of human rights and moral principle and his loyal service to every philanthropic cause. He was a thorough optimist because of the clearness of his faith in God. So he infused into all his moral efforts the hope and cheer which only religious faith can give.

Yet Brooks did not become, characteristically, a moralist or the champion of particular reforms. I never heard of a want of humanity so homely and practical that it had to wait or ask for his sympathy, his emphatic word, his generous aid. Against slavery, as I have recounted, he spoke with all the force, almost with the acerbity, of his great kinsman, Wendell Phillips. In war-time his voice was as a trumpet for the Union and freedom. He could labor to secure colored men their simplest rights in our own streets. He stood for temperance, for political reform.

Yet he remained distinctively a *religionist*. It was, as I have said, men seen as children of God, heirs of eternal life, that stirred the love and pity of his great heart and fired his zeal. To bring them to feel religious truth, to realize their possibilities as spiritual beings,—this remained the inspiring aim and impulse of his life.

This made him the powerful preacher that he was. The union of religious faith with loving sympathy and moral enthusiasm supplied all that was needed to a man of fine intellectual gifts, of generous culture, of rich imagination, of ardent temperament and an inborn genius for eloquent speech, to make him great as a prophet of truth to his fellow-men. Even his intellectual limitations defended and favored him in

this, his peculiar office. Had he been more profound and philosophic as a thinker, he might have lost something of clearness in his vision of the conceptions which were true to him, or been tempted into regions too recondite for the eager and fervid treatment which he gave to all the subjects of his thought. As it was, he laid hold of a few great ideas; grasped firmly a few great principles; above all, saw ever before him one radiant vision, the image of the divine man, the Master, the Leader, to whom his passionate loyalty was that of a soldier to the chieftain he adores; and he was not capable of being seriously agitated in the foundations of his faith by the doubts which ate into the hearts of some of his fellows, by the intellectual difficulties of his unintricate creed, by the discussions surging about him in the mind of his day.

I dare say many problems of being which rack the bosoms of some remained unopened to his simple heart. The love of God answered them all. That love he felt. That love it was his glad, his absorbing office to proclaim.

God's love, man's spiritual franchise as his child, the beauty of holiness, the hopefulness of being,—these broad themes he set forth in every variety of expression and application, with every illustration from life, with fervor utterly genuine and eloquence as unstudied as it was moving and exalting.

Again, had he been more a man of the intellectual mould, he might have grasped some profounder interpretations of the verities of the spirit. He might have been the Luther to guide a reformation of doc-

trine which still needs a leader as devoted, as intrepid, as magnetic, as he would have been. As it was, Phillips Brooks remained a great preacher of religion.

But the limitations of his theological point of view could only partly obscure the light of the eternal truth, burning at its core. Dogmas shrivelled in those fervid rays! Perhaps he did not widely mould men's *opinions*; but he enlarged the minds of thousands, he broadened their sympathies, he taught them where the *essence* of religion lies, and he "*turned many to righteousness.*"

These were his simple aims,—to regenerate the particular souls whom his untiring voice might reach. His heart was ever with the individual man or woman whom he might comfort and redeem.

"And, as a bird each fond endearment tries  
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,  
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,  
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

I think that in this simplicity of his religious influence he has been unique among the great preachers to whom America has listened.

Phillips Brooks is dead! No, not dead, translated only, to some higher service! Surely, it is the last office of such a career to convince us of man's immortality. We cannot conceive of Divine Providence *squandering* the moral and spiritual force accumulated in such a nature, matured in a character so nobly rounded, and which *only* a life-period of broad experience and of unselfish service could develop and assure.

The "prodigality of nature" offers no parallel for such a waste as that would be.

Nor can we believe that under the economy of a wise and almighty God the chance chill of an earthly day may quench forever the celestial fire of a soul so vigorous and of so intense a glow!

Over the earthly career of Phillips Brooks we may write in letters unwavering the legend which the ancients loved, which to so few may be undoubtingly applied, "Felix," — "Happy."

Save in the incompleteness of the domestic relation, every blessing, it would seem, which men chiefly prize was heaped upon him. He was well-descended, of a stock perhaps the best in any country; of an ancestry honorable through many generations, on both sides prominent in their community, and repeatedly devoted to the ministry of religion. He was well born, of a worthy father, of a devoted, assiduous mother, who watched her brood of boys with more than usual care, had the art to keep them very close to herself, and planted in them the seeds of religious lives. The home of Phillips Brooks was happy, refined, religious.

He was well-bred, surrounded by similar refinement, culture, and good morals in the social circle in which he moved.

He was well-educated, at the best schools of his day and at the college which has led the rest in the liberal spirit as well as in the "liberal arts." It was part of his good fortune (I believe he would himself have said) that he was reared in the city of Channing, and imbibed the liberal spirit which has breathed in its crisp air.

He also had what to a good man is a blessing, wealth; and, above all other earthly goods, he had, till he impaired it through his zeal of service, abounding, vigorous health.

He had even, in a wonderful degree, the advantages of person,—a figure majestic and not cumbrous, though so great; the bearing of a prince; a beautiful, manly, gracious countenance; a smile how sweet and winning! the eyes of Webster; and a voice in public so potent, in private of intonation virile, refined, cordial.

He was the ideal of a gentleman. Nature and fortune tried even to make in him an aristocrat; but grace forbade. The curl of his lip, the poise of his head,—that “head of a god,” it has been lately called,—might well have meant pride, had not a benevolence truly Christian and the deep humility of a disciple ruled his heart.

Then he had success. His career was one long, unchecked course of rewarded effort and popular applause. He had that dangerous, splendid gift, eloquence. He was admired. He became the fashion. From his youthful days crowds followed him,—partly in sincerity, partly because it was the vogue. He had for his coigne of vantage one of the grandest of church-edifices. He knew himself the most popular preacher of his day. At last, because the people would have it so, he was raised to the highest dignity in his Church.

Surely, here was a perfect earthly career. Let us write “Felix” over it,—giving thanks to God!

But it was perfected only through the spirit which



animated it. It was the spirit of simplicity, of humility, of unselfishness, of service, of consecration. "I have made myself the servant of all," he might truly have declared.

He had ten talents; and he devoted every one to the greater honor of God, to the welfare of men. Each advantage he enjoyed seemed but to enhance his usefulness. Good birth and breeding saved him from vanity, so that success did not spoil him in the least. His wealth he scattered abroad in charity. His superabundant physical power only served him to do twice a man's tale of unselfish work. His social advantages, his personal gifts, his popularity as a preacher, his position in his Church,—all were means, only, to spread abroad the truth and help his fellows. Every talent rendered back tenfold! So from earth he has gone. Phillips Brooks is dead! But what is death to such as he?

His life seems short; but it was of double length, crowded full of generous duty. "I have made myself the servant of all."

A full, beautiful, fruitful life; ended too soon for us,—ended, I dare say he would have felt, had he known the end was near, too soon for him. When would such a servant of his kind have been ready to depart? But he would have answered cheerily to his Lord's call to come up higher. Let those he has left forlorn be content. God knows all. With Him "all is right that seems most wrong."

And everything is timely,—in eternity.

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SECULARISM AND ITS REMEDY

BY

THOMAS R. SLICER

Minister of the Church of our Father, Buffalo, N.Y.

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## SECULARISM AND ITS REMEDY.

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“Be renewed in the spirit of your minds.”—EPH. iv. 23.

IN the thinking of the writers of the New Testament there was no confusion between the inner life and the outer life of man. As we would speak of a man and his house, so they spoke of the spiritual and the carnal life. This was due not so much to their living in a world of ideas as that they dwelt in a world of ideals.

These souls, of fine proportion and mighty stature, were able to lift themselves above the margin of common life, and, looking over its level, see what lay upon its further horizons. Like their Master, they had discovered that “the life is more than meat,” that “man should not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” By means of this spiritual insight a new meaning was put into common language. Then sprang to the front a new sense in common speech. They no longer contented themselves with speaking of things. They formed the habit of speaking of the qualities of things. At times they spoke the highest language possible, in which the quality became the very thing itself to them. Then new spheres of thought were created, radiant; and a new heaven and a new earth came into view in the firmament of

thought. Therefore was it that to them there was no such word as "disembodied." It had no place in their vocabulary, because it had no place in their thinking. To each successive evolution "God gave its own; *i.e.*, its proper body." In the synagogue worship they sang, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof"; but they gave this idea a new significance when they said in the early Church, "God is all and in all." This phrase "God is all" was unfolded until it grew to a literature of spiritual life. Just as the biologist seeks the hidden springs of motion, and believes that the acme of knowledge is the philosophy of being, so these practical souls in the early days of Christianity were never content to deal simply with the hull and husk of life. To them "life was hid"; but it was not therefore to be abandoned as inscrutable, "unknowable." It was "hid in God," but they were "to know the fellowship of the mystery which was hid in God."

Thus the idea of incarnation was not foreign to the manner of thinking current among these idealists. They regarded manifestation as a necessary result of being. They were in no sense materialists. Matter was but a manifestation of mind. Even "the Word was made flesh." The Eternal Reason was not ideal simply, but actual. It was not only Being, but also Becoming. The distinction which we have been accustomed to express in terms difficult and abstract they said very simply was the difference between a thing and the spirit of the thing, the difference between the eye and sight, the difference between substance and essence. This distinction they carried

very minutely into detail, as when the writer to the Hebrews compares spirit and soul to the marrow in the bone: "The word of God is living and powerful, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Nothing in all the New Testament is more wonderful than this striking to the very central truth, which every revival in philosophy reaffirms. Let us see if there be in it promise also for our own time. We have long watched those two gaunt forms, Materialism and Secularism, striding before us, boastful heralds of "a new heaven and a new earth," the one claiming all science and the other claiming all common life; but we see through them now, that they are but the restless ghosts of two mighty forces dead,—Reason slain by superstition and Reverence trampled by the rush of modern life. Therefore do these spectres haunt the halls of science and the marts of trade, and declare the one that all life is a concourse of atoms, and the other that there is no such thing possible as the celebrating of daily duties as a sacrament. Materialism and Secularism, the foes of high faith and sublime trust. The first declares there is no future, and so high faith can have no object. The second bids man live with such carnal force as though he had none to trust but himself. Thus again they make ready to stone the prophets at whose feet they must yet learn the lesson of life.

Now, you may ask, "What interest have we in the revival of a spiritual view of the universe?" The very question shows how sorely this revival is needed.

This is no problem of the schools simply. It was long ago stated by the greatest of teachers in a question asked of a congregation very much more simple than that one which hears it now; but, here or there, the need is the same, the same danger of a suicidal secularism threatens, and there presses for answer: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose himself?" The mind bartered for things! Now, just this is what happens to a man when, instead of a body of flesh surrounding and housing a mind sensitive, the mind of flesh "dwells in the fleshly tabernacle." This is that carnal mind which is "enmity against God." There is needed the exhortation of the text, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind"; for there is something more to be determined about a mind than that it is a well-adjusted mechanism for turning out thoughts. It is not a mere "idea-pot," as John Sterling would say, which we are to keep boiling up and boiling over. We will never learn what a sacred thing reason is until we learn that, as there is mind in the body which regulates and directs the motions of the body, so there is a "spirit of the mind," which makes all the difference between thinking and thought. "Be renewed in the spirit of your minds." Was ever exhortation more practical? The other day I came across a letter of John Stuart Mill, in which his thought, always so discriminating, takes the course we are now pursuing. In this letter he asks: "Is not what you term the mind, as distinguished from the spirit, merely that spirit looking at things as through a glass darkly,—compelled, in short, by the conditions of its terrestrial existence

to see and know by means of media, just as the mind uses the bodily organs? for to suppose that the eye is necessary to sight seems to me the notion of one immersed in matter. What we call our bodily sensations are all in the mind, and would not necessarily or probably cease because the body perishes. As the eye is but the window through which, not the power by which, the mind sees, so probably the understanding is the bodily eye of the human spirit, which looks through that window, or, rather, which sees images of things in this life, while in another it may or might be capable of seeing the things themselves."

This, which in 1842 was a speculation with John Stuart Mill, the advance of science has gone far to prove. It has not found out anything about this same thing which looks through the window of the mind, this "spirit of the mind"; but it has come to understand the window itself. It has taken apart and examined the mirrors on which the images of this life are shown, and it has found out one most important fact; namely, that there is nothing in the mechanism which will adequately explain the strange and wonderful work which it accomplishes. It is not enough to say: Here is a most intricate mechanism. Some one made it. Now, we have to account for some one else who is to use it, to regulate it and adjust it, and wind it up and apply it to its use. You can dissect a nerve, you can inject it with carmine color, you can put it under a microscope, and talk learnedly about fibres and ganglia and ramifications; but, when you have carefully discriminated between sensor and motor systems of nerves, and calculated



the exact length of time it requires to make an impression on the nerves of the ear by a recital of distress, to telegraph this impression to the central office in the brain, to send a message thence that brings tears to the eyes and help into the hands and a strange yearning sympathy into the affections,—I say, when you have done all this, you have been eluded by a subtle something called “nerve influence,” the spirit of the nervous system. And there is still another spirit to which this nervous influence is the swift-footed messenger, the “spirit of the mind,” which causes nervous influence in one to take the form of pity for sorrow and in another impatience and cruelty. In finding out so much about the brain, you have found out but little about the mind and nothing about the spirit of the mind. In other words, you have but found, as in the old myth, the cattle which Mercury has driven where he would; but you have not seen the winged God, nor him who sent him on his errand. You have seen the channels, the avenues, through which an unseen presence threads its way; but you have not heard its footfall as it passed. You have found out about as much concerning the spirit in man as you would know if you went into an artist’s studio, and saw his half-finished picture, his palette with colors and brushes, all the implements of his art. These are the things he uses and the work he does. The artist has gone home. What sight is to the eye, what the engineer is to the engine, what the blood is to the vein, what the electric fluid is to the wire, that to the mind is the “spirit of the mind.” It cannot be calculated in any terms other than those of its

manifestations, which is equivalent to saying we cannot know it. We can only witness it in operation. We know there is sight, for we see; yet the seeing is not sight. Let a cataract form on the eye, we say carelessly the man is blind. He is no more blind than an astronomer is blind when the telescope is capped. The instrument of vision is rendered for the time being useless. So of the mind. That there is a spirit which moves it we know; for the brain witnesses to sensation, registers perceptions, recalls them as concepts, and reproduces them as memories, enlarges them by imaginative combinations, decides among them by judgment, and makes them an instrument of attack or defence by reason,—in a word, presides over the whole process of thinking, and yet is distinct from the process. It is the “spirit of the mind” that does all this with all these. What flavor is in fruit is this spirit of the mind. What light is to the lamp, what tone is to the organ, what quality is to the voice, is this spirit of the mind to all that encloses it and expresses it. Take the flavor from the fruit, and it is no more than its wax counterfeit. Take the light from the lamp, and it had better not be in the hand if you are groping in the darkness. Draw off the blood from the veins, and the man can be made to jerk his limbs by an electric shock; but he is no longer a man. He is only a machine moved by a machine.

I have thus far added illustration to illustration in order to convey a single concept, to make you feel what is meant by “spirit of the mind,” and what is the force of the exhortation, “Be renewed in the spirit

of your minds." Now, let us apply the phrase. What is that which makes the difference between men but the "spirit of the mind," the flavor of their thinking? By virtue of it one man is noble and another ignoble, though they be doing the same thing and thinking the same thought. No veneer can hide it. No external polish can quite conceal the grain of the wood. Put the man where you will, thrust him into a crowd of business competitors or set him some 'lonely task; put him in charge of some grave responsibility, or invite him to a friendly chat and a social meal; drop him down in a strange city in Europe or meet him walking the ways of his native village; set him among men, where there are no women to make them as proper as a congregation of saints, or let him be the one man in a drawing-room, with not a single companion of his own sex to keep him in countenance,—it does not matter. The spirit of his mind will manifest itself, and show whether he is a wholesome nature or a festering mass of unacknowledged dishonor.

More than this, this spirit of the mind is a unit. Attempt to divide it, and you make a fraction at once. You have all known men one thing in their intercourse with men in business and wholly different at home,—suave and smooth when a sale is pending, and impatient and brutally neglectful when they come home to take their revenge on the family for being compelled to be so unlike themselves all day. They read the censure of the New Testament against hypocrites, and never for a moment think of applying it to themselves. They do not seem to know that the

“hypocrites” were only “play actors,” a thing perfectly allowable when it is a declared and conscious affair, and high crime against integrity when it is not avowed. The “spirit of the mind” is a unit. You cannot present its halves, turning its illumined hemisphere to the public and its night side to the home. A wholesome nature is a nature whole. As the air must penetrate every cell of the lungs in order to produce healthy action, so the spirit of the mind must appear in all its exercise, in all its thinking, in every relation in life, else either disease has set in or is threatening. When you say of a man, “There is a mean streak in his nature,” “There is a coarse fibre in his ‘make-up,’ there is something about him that makes it unwholesome to breathe in the same atmosphere in which he lives,” “His influence is not good upon your boy,” or you yourself are not so erect, so upright, after being in his depressing company,—when you become thus conscious of the man, you may be sure it is the spirit of his mind which has impressed you. This presiding influence is a unit. It cannot dwell in two at once divided. It will either declare there are two contending forces, or else the two unite to constitute that final unity of minds akin in spirit, one spirit dominating both. This did Jesus express in that notable saying, “I and my Father are one.”

When we speak of the spirit of the mind in the individual, we cannot well refrain from going one step further, in order to estimate the aggregate spirit of the mind in a community or the age. Just as a certain type of thought will characterize the philosophical

speculation of a time, so a certain spirit will permeate the mind of the time. The type of thought which has been insistent for a generation past has been materialism, degenerating into agnosticism. Agnosticism is simply materialism brought to a standstill by the wall of mystery, which every man, even the most superficial, will find somewhere built across his path; and the correspondent to materialism and agnosticism is secularism. These three lines enclose a space in which neither temple nor altar will ever be built. Materialism says all things from the ground arise. Secularism declares that it is well that man should be "of the earth, earthy." Materialism confesses the brute relationships of things, and secularism approves them; for, if the definition be a good one that "man is a religious animal," and he deny himself the exercise of a religious faculty, it is not difficult to see what is left. I think it is scientifically demonstrable that every faculty of man's nature can be expressed in the terms of animal life, when you have once dismissed from the account the religious and moral factors. Outside these the difference in animals must be expressed in terms of degree, not of kind, muscular energy, intellectual faculties. It is only a question of how much more or less, how much more simple or complex. The one distinguishing characteristic of humanity is the power to vitalize with a divine breath of life the actions and thoughts which man shares with creatures less endowed. We are in danger of having this endowment pushed aside in the rush of events in our busy life. The spirit of the time is adverse to meditation, which is sacrificed in

the interests of speculation; and, a false standard of life being fixed upon, the secular temper dominates the mind. The spirit of the mind thus becomes carnal, and it is no longer easy to persuade men that "the souls of the sons of God are greater than their business." I know how difficult it is to make men understand the relation between religion and life. The relation is not so much a relation proper as an identity. Religion is not only consistent with the broadest and highest life, it is that life. A man's religion is his business in life. It is an exhortation ringing false in tone to tell men to carry their religion into their business. It ought never to have been carried out, unless it was dead. It indicates that fatal divorce which puts religion on one side and common life on the other; and life will always remain common, with a tendency to become unclean, until it is spiritualized by a religious inspiration. "What God hath cleansed call thou not common," can only be applied to what gives evidence of having passed through the waters or the fire of a divine baptism.

There was no way known to ancient philosophy or to primitive Christianity but the being "renewed in the spirit of the mind." This Platonist and Stoic alike felt after. The Brahman, talking of "the twice-born man," dimly realized it. The Buddhist brought it into prominence with the struggle toward "the great renunciation." The Parsee, worshipping the light, sought "to make the skirts of darkness narrower." Christianity alone saves the man while it points him to the path of regeneration. Only this religion among all others was bold enough to declare,

“All things are yours,” “Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” Christianity clearly understands the entire identity of religion and common life. “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord.” “Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” But this divine philosophy can never take the place of the reigning secularism until men accept the condition which it prescribes. Not penance of self-denial, not reform of ways and means, no lopping of branches, can do more than for a time retard growth. The new growth will be ranker than the old. It is not pruning, but grafting, that is needed. The spirit of the mind is at fault, not the mind. That which is the flavor of the mind must be changed. No mechanical adjustment of the life to a model, though that model be faultless, can be sufficient. The spirit in man must submit itself to the spirit of God. It must have the downfall from on high upon it. It “must be born from above.” It is wrong. It must be rightened before it can be righteous. It is worn with doing work without adequate inspiration. It must be renewed. To this renewing of the spirit of the mind secularism opposes itself. It says: It is all right for your churches to be maintained, and we will help do it; but you must get somebody to do the church work, and we will pay the bills. It is not our department. There are men called to the ministry, and it is their business to attend to our religious observances.

It seems never to occur to these men, who thus

build churches as Hollanders build dikes, that there is nothing to hinder the spirit of the mind of the Church being secular, if it is built and maintained in a secular spirit. Witness that service in the Cathedral of York some years since, which celebrated the English victories in Egypt. Hear the voice of the clergy saying these words, written for them by the archbishop: "We glorify thee for the late victory granted to our army, whereby as in a moment peace has been restored to Egypt, the highway between England and our Indian Empire has been made safe, and the pursuits of peace have already been resumed by the Egyptian people. Teach us to see that thy hand hath done it, that thou wast in the midst of our camp to deliver us, and to give up our enemies before us. Bring us all to love and fear thee, and put our trust under the shadow of thy wings."

Could anything be more full of the secular spirit than that prayer, sordidly taking account of British interest in India and making no mention of death except to rejoice over it? It is the old story of the shameless dance of the king before the ark of God, while the secular press, like Saul's daughter, looks out of its window and mocks the Church grown secular. The curse of the dying Mohammedans contained certain words about infidels which the Archbishop of York would have found it hard to disprove.

It seems never to occur to these men who sustain the Church and its ministry that there is nothing to hinder the minister from being utterly secular. He may do his routine work with an entire abandonment of the sense of religion in it; and I say to you, with



all the seriousness of which I am capable, that no minister can long maintain his spiritual fervor if his prayers make no echo or his words only stir an appreciation of their rhetorical propriety. No man can long resist the secular temper in a congregation. You cannot make a fire with one log.

No, my friends, we must seek that "renewing of the spirit of the mind" which shall make an end of secularism by making all things sacred. We talk about "sacred sorrow" too much. Joy is just as sacred. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Christ never said much about sorrow. He did say, "These things I have spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full." We talk about the service of religion. All service should be religious. The most religious of men said, "I am among you as one that serveth." We surround the table of the Lord, and call the bread and wine a sacrament. Is the table about which friends gather in the home any less sacred, and should not a man's daily duties stir him to sacramental devotion? Let it not be said that this makes life too serious. Life is serious already. This is the only way I know to lighten its load, to shift it from the shoulders of care to the altars of daily prayer, and accept it again as a commission from the hand of Eternal Love. Thus shall we be "renewed in the spirit of our minds," no longer doing eye service as men-pleasers, but doing the will of God from the heart.

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THE NARROW WAY

BY

THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

Minister of All Souls Church, New York

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## THE NARROW WAY.

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“Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life.”  
MATT. vii. 14.

THESE solemn words are true even of the life of the body; for both in sickness and in health our life is a delicate balancing of forces, and depends upon conditions that are strictly and implacably defined. The higher the kind of life at which you aim, the narrower is the path along which it is necessary to go. Ordinary good health by ordinary people may be preserved without much taking care; but if a man wants not merely ordinary, but superb and perfect vigor either of body or brain, he must submit to the severest rules and restrictions. The athlete must train. By a single neglect of his trainer's orders, his victorious stroke is impaired, the spring, the perfect form of his play, is gone. This was the illustration used by Saint Paul: “They that contend in the games are strictly governed in all respects. Now they do it for a corruptible garland, but we for an incorruptible.”

But the higher the faculty to be preserved, the more perfect the excellence desired, always the stricter is the rule and the narrower the path. The great singer stands every night before the public, and pours out the splendid, exuberant song that seems the expression of a human soul set free; but for this perfection of result a great price is paid. The great singer is

watched and guarded like a race-horse, is concerned every hour for the care of the precious voice, lest the wonderful but most delicate instrument should vary by one clouded note from its full power of sweetness.

What limitations beset the brain-workers, especially those whose intellectual work is of the highest class! Read the biographies of literary men, and see what severe and elaborate regimen they have adopted to secure their finest results. Each knows what brief hours in the day are fitted for his golden task, and, to secure these hours, his whole life is ordered; and, to bring the brain to its best creative faculties, what endless expedients! One man fasts and lives indoors. Another takes plenty of beef and fresh air. One must live in rural solitude. Another thinks at his best in the midmost roar of London or Paris. One touches no stimulant of any kind or name; yet every stimulant, from the harmless tea to the deadly opium, can count some famous writer who thought he owed half his working power to it. All this shows in what a narrow path the intellectual worker finds himself.

Everywhere we look, we find our life encompassed by limitations. God has "beset us behind and before, and laid his hand upon us." We see, also, that this limitation of life is not the source of weakness, but of man's highest power and fame. It is not only for little men in little things, but for human life at its best and greatest. The strong man, the great man, whether hero or artist, poet, thinker, or saint, is not one who bursts the bonds of law, and casts obedience away, but rather one who walks a narrower, severer path than weaker men are able to keep.

Alas for the weaker natures that never accept this stern law of the narrow path! Those persons, however gifted, who have not this power of obedience, of submitting to wholesome discipline, of facing the narrow round of practice, of persevering in monotonous industry, are notoriously useless and ineffective. In every calling in life there is no excellence, no first-class result, for any but those who enter into the strait gate. The world has enough of slovenly, careless work, enough of unsteady, inattentive, useless people. Everywhere the world's demand is for perfect work,—work which is the best of its kind,—and workmen who can observe to the uttermost of exactness the necessary conditions of their art.

Nothing in the education of the young is more important than what goes to produce in the young man or woman the power of self-concentration, and the power of doing things exactly, perfectly. The student will forget most of the college lore; but he can never forget, if once acquired, the difference between thoroughness and superficiality, between clear ideas in clear words, and hazy thoughts clumsily expressed. Never will the lesson be unlearned that all excellence, all knowledge worth having, is only won by work, by accepting some narrow path and walking persistently in it till one's goal is reached.

It cannot be too early impressed upon the mind, nor can the lesson be too often repeated, that the measure of success in life — *i.e.*, of any true and honest success — lies in the power of exact and persistent work. It is the power of the narrow path. The successful man is he whose life is concentrated upon its task, who

day after day, year after year, can get out of himself a large amount of his best work. Not he who casts aside the limitations of life, and wanders at his own sweet will, but he who masters the limitations by fulfilling them, is the strong and effective man. The narrow path of perfect work,—how few there be who find it! How broad is the way, how many the possible varieties of failure that make men's lives practically useless! In everything you have to do there are many ways of doing it badly, and only one way that is the best, or only one that is best for you.

Of all the limitations which beset our lives, perhaps none are more keenly and generally felt than those which lie in the very nature and necessity of all work. Is this, then, the path that leadeth unto life? Is it, as the oldest philosophy taught, a primal curse upon mankind that "by the sweat of thy brow thou shalt earn bread"? Or is it, in the language of to-day, a mere "struggle for existence," a hard necessity, which we escape only at our peril?

We shall best understand the spiritual result of it all when we consider how universal it is. In every land, even in our own prosperous country, the "toiling millions" are always the vast majority. Even where there is no actual suffering and destitution, there is the constant pressure of care, constant narrowing and setting aside of personal wishes and desires. Very few are the men who live and labor as they would, and not as they must. Even those who, by accumulations of wealth, are set free from the burdens of immediate anxiety, by no means escape from the general struggle for existence. Though having daily

bread, and freed from the burden of toil that weighs upon the mass of men, they none the less have strife, anxiety, and many unsatisfied wants. That same Dives in the parable, who fared sumptuously every day, was often seen, his brow clouded with care, endeavoring to buy some choicer vineyard or planning some statelier house or bribing, it may be, the Roman tax-gatherer to allow him more favorable assessments. There are many, indeed, who are wise enough not to allow the passion for accumulation, or the cares of their actual possessions, to take away their peace of mind; but, so long as Lazarus lies at Dives's gate, every right-feeling rich man must feel the solemn responsibility of his position, must bear his brother's burden and hear the bitter cry of the poor. Thus upon all men alike, irrespective of wealth or want, is laid the limitation of our human lot which makes toil and struggle a necessity. I am sorry for the man, for the woman, who does not know that life is a battle, who does not know what price of toil and sacrifice is paid for everything that we use or enjoy. Not to know this, not to be bearing one's share of the world's task, is a kind of cowardice and treachery.

What, then, is the compensation for this hard pressure of material necessity around the lives of men? Why is it that simply to live at all, to be housed, warmed, and fed (and, in the end, not so well as the bird in its nest), requires such vast exertion? The only satisfying answer is that for the human race, as a whole, the hard terms of our task are not only a material, but a spiritual necessity. Without these con-



ditions there could be no development of our moral nature. With us the struggle for existence is not merely for strength and conquest, but also for spiritual strength, for moral excellence and worth. Among the lower creatures, this same struggle gives the prize to beauty and vigor, and keeps every living thing at its highest possibility, health, and power; but, in the discipline of the human animal, something still better is accomplished. We may now say in a deeper sense than ever that a good man is the noblest work of God; for, when in the evolution of humanity and in the struggle for life the moral and spiritual power appear, the trained will, the ordered passions, the unselfish affections, something has been arrived at which is more valuable than life itself. The hardships of life are the school of character. The necessities of labor and care save us from sluggishness and stagnancy, and stimulate the soul to its full activity.

Even if this life were all, a full life even of tumult and strain is better than a fruitless peace.

But let us remember that in the fortifying of our higher manhood by faithfulness and courage, by patience and good cheer, by honor, perseverance, and self-sacrifice, we are strengthening powers that will remain long after the vanishing away of the occasions which called them forth. "Heaven and earth," says the Master, "shall pass away; but my word shall not pass away." These earthly conditions under which we live are only for a time. These objects we pursue so passionately now, will one day lie behind, worthless and forgotten, like the toys of childhood when youth is past. But none the less, as the games of youth

have formed the body of the man to strength and symmetry, as the student's forgotten books have trained his mind for higher problems, so do all this world's interests leave behind them an eternal result. That result is character. The stringent discipline, the vigilant strife, have brought forth the "peaceable fruit of righteousness in them that were exercised thereby." Out of these limitations of our earthly life come the powers within us which point onward to the eternal and heavenly. Through this strait and narrow way we are led upward into life.

Let me speak now of another limitation of life which does not and ought not, like the primal necessity of work, to press equally upon all. I mean the limitation of impaired health, of natural feebleness of power, or insufficient nervous energy. Some people never know fatigue. Others seldom know anything else. To not a few the very words "sickness" and "pain" stand for evils very far away from themselves. To others, not a few, these mysterious limitations are a part of life itself. I shall not contradict the teaching of the Gospels by saying that sickness, such as our Master and his followers ever rejoiced to heal, is not a calamity. It is undoubtedly so,—a heavy burden to bear, a severe trial of our faith, and requiring the fullest exercise of faith, love, and hope, not only on the part of the sufferers themselves, but of all who are near them; and it is our duty in all instances of this affliction to labor and to pray for relief, for speedy deliverance, so far as such prayer consists with peaceful submission to the will of God. And yet, although sickness is indeed a calamity, it

is not a curse. I mean by a curse in the biblical sense, that which shuts us out from God, separates us from our brothers, and blights within us the power of spiritual growth. Pharaoh was cursed when his heart was hardened against his suffering slaves. Belshazzar was cursed when permitted to continue in his wicked course till ruin came upon him. There are no curses but of our own making, the result of defiant, persistent, and impenitent sin. But sickness, though it may be a useful discipline to us, is in no sense a penalty of sin. It falls alike upon the children at their innocent play or the aged hero still toiling on to serve his fellow-men, alike upon the worldly and selfish, and upon those already subdued by many sorrows, who seem beyond the need of any further discipline to purify from earth or to soften the heart for heaven. Never in any particular case can we view sickness either as a punishment, or as the harshness of some hard instructor. Rather in all cases we may regard bodily weakness simply as the narrowing of our path. As it takes away many of our liberties and powers, it also removes many temptations, and makes many virtues easier. It is a strait gate and narrow way, by which none the less we may follow on into life. It does not prevent us from coming nearer to God, but rather invites us nearer, giving us new motives to faith and trust, making us inclined, as our human weakness is more evident, to lean the more upon the everlasting arms. Without doubt sickness naturally predisposes us to religion. If we resist this inclination, it is at a grievous cost. Unless we are able in the hour of pain

to turn to divine help, we are not likely to learn the deeper lessons of faith when our strength and health return. The same thing is true of our human affections. Sickness softens all hearts, and predisposes us to draw closer to all our friends, and especially to those nearest. Sickness is a wonderful call to all concerned for increased tenderness, seriousness, and mutual helpfulness. The family into which it has come is bound together already into closer bonds of love and dependence. Rarely, indeed, does this effect fail. But how much deeper and more lasting is this natural softening of the heart, when we accept it as our fulfilling of the law of Christ, by which we are divinely encouraged to "bear one another's burdens," and by which our human weakness becomes the inspirer of our purest affections, our most loving and tender services! Then, indeed, "though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day." Some of the most victorious and beautiful of lives have been lived under this refining, deepening, and softening effect of bodily weakness. If I began to name them, I should weary you with the long list; and how many there are, unnamed on any printed page, but whose courage, patience, heavenly faith, purity of heart, and warmth of loving devotion, are written in the book of life, and recorded in the hearts that were blessed by their example and fellowship! They walked the narrow way of weakness and pain, but walked it clothed in light, ever upward and onward. The benefit such lives bestow on others is more than can be measured by any standard of common service; for who are those who do the most good in the world?

Not those who merely hew wood and draw water, and nothing more; not those who accomplish worldly success and fame, with nothing more; but those who reveal to us the powers and possibilities of character, who build us statelier mansions for the soul, who take us, as it were, out of the flesh, and show us where our true joys are to be found,— in the life with God, and in true-hearted fidelity to all that is loving, noble, and brave. These lives, in whom the flesh is weak, but the spirit mighty, are not to be counted as the shipwrecks along the sands of time; but rather they are like light-ships, which anchor near quiet harbors, which never put out upon the open sea, but carry the beacon which guides other vessels to their desired haven.

But there is another natural limitation of life which is also rich in spiritual results. It is one which presses upon all alike. I mean the shortness of life. Life seems shorter to us all every year we live. To youth it stretches on like eternity. To age it is “as it were a span long.”

Yet I would not speak of this shortness of life as merely a mournful story. It should be to us not a depressing, but rather an invigorating fact. The nobler moral to draw is not that our brief portion here is very disappointing and vain, but simply that we have no time to lose. Brethren, the time is short, but it is precious. If there is a duty left undone, begin it to-day,— some kind word you have left unspoken, some gift of love and truth you have withheld. Who knows if the opportunity will come again?

“Work while it is day, for the night cometh.” See how different life is, as men interpret basely or

nobly this urgency and swiftness of time allotted us. To the trifler it makes life more trifling; and he wastes it aimlessly, because so little can be done, and soon it will all be over. But in the larger and more serious nature the sense of the rapid current of things produces a more eager and ardent service, a solemn anxiety to fill the passing moments full. Here, again, the narrow path is the way to life. The stricter sense of limit, the consciousness of a vanishing opportunity, are an incentive to a greater intensity of life, to lay aside every weight, to stop every waste of force, to live more deeply, richly, and purely. We are seldom aware how much life is intensified by the simple and commonplace fact that it is uncertain. This unspoken truth gives a pathos and fervor to our greetings and farewells. When many years ago the regiments marched through the streets of our city on the way to the seat of war, about to offer their duty on the mortal field, as the people thronged windows and the streets to see, hardly an eye that was not moistened or a heart but throbbed with the beating drums at that solemn sight. Yet what was it but a type of the stream of humanity as it ever files by us, with all its banners borne by men about to die? *Morituri salutamus*; and we salute each other as we pass. In the great battles of the world, we know not who are to remain as veterans for the fight or whose service will end with the first encounter. All our life, would we see it as it is, would have something of the dignity of the soldier's in active service, something of his noble carelessness of to-morrow, his punctilious honor, his impatience of delay, his habit of keeping every weapon ready and burnished for an instant call.

Is our life short? Then God grant we may keep it at its best, and “so number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”!

Thus, wherever we look, the world seems to offer us limitations and restraint. The poverty of our resources, the weakness of our frail bodies, the swiftness of time, the shortness of life,—all these things seem, to our impatient look, the severities of God; but, when these things are spiritually discerned,—that is, when we see them only in relation to what is highest and holiest in our natures,—they become our means of growth. The vine is pruned only that it may bring forth more fruit. The way is narrow only lest we wander too far afield, and miss our journey’s end.

This is the Christian’s faith concerning our life on earth, that, if we have God on our side, if our hearts are right and we are moving heavenward, there is no obstacle, no cause for defeat or failure outside of ourselves. The obstacles help us, the restraints make us stronger, the weaknesses make us lay hold upon almighty power. Is this our faith? Do we live by it? Are we cheerful and brave? Is there light upon our sorrows, and help for our heaviest burden? Let us pray that the Lord may increase our faith, for this faith will increase as we live by it. It has stood the test for millions of experiments. Try it. Take the narrowness of your life as your opportunity to be more loving, brave, patient, and true, to trust your heavenly Father more, to draw nearer to other human lives which are hard like yours. Do not bear your cross alone. Lift it up to God, and his light will shine upon it. Let it be your means of more ardent service, more perfect obedience.







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THE OUTLOOK FOR THE CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP

Minister of the Unitarian Congregational Church, Syracuse, N. Y.

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SERIES II

MARCH 5, 1893

No. 17

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## THE OUTLOOK FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

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"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."—I COR. X. II.

"There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed."—JOSHUA XIII. I.

THE history of Israel has made the vocabulary of Christendom. Her sacred places are still the household words of the Church. Her Bethels and Zions, her Shilohs and Zoars, her Nazareths and Jerusalems, are so many cities of the spirit to-day. Yon Methodist meeting-house is christened a Bethel, because ages ago a solitary Hebrew wanderer once laid his weary head on a stone, and dreamed dreams of heaven. Mount Zion, the city where David dwelt, has become the synonym for the hill of heaven. The new Jerusalem is still the home of the soul that has passed the river of death.

In fact, the whole history of Israel has been taken as a type of the history of the soul of man, with all its hopes and fears, its trials and its victories, its sin and its salvation. Its Egypt is the type of this present world, its pomp and pride, its sensuality and its tyranny, wherein the souls of the children of God are kept in bitter bondage. Its Red Sea is the water of baptism, the death to the old Egypt of sin, and the

first step toward the new land of righteousness. From its Sinai the moral law yet thunders its awful sanctions. Its pillar of fire and cloud is still the most striking symbol of the divine guidance. Every step in the desert gives birth to spiritual symbols. The ark of the covenant, the water from the rock, the manna in the wilderness, are still hints of the better covenant God has made with his children of the latter day, and the bread and water of the Spirit wherewith he feeds their soul's hunger and thirst. Israel's rebellions and murmurings still breathe notes of warning in the Christian's ear; and the weary wanderings of forty years in a waste wilderness, when a few days of faith and courage would have sufficed to set them in the Promised Land of their hopes, is a sad though terribly truthful type of the million million souls that loiter round the gate of heaven, knowing no rest save that, and yet, for lack of one grand spasm of resolve, still enter not. Its Pisgah still types the mount of vision, whence the Divine Land of Promise is seen by the eye of faith. Its Jordan still names that great water of death through which all souls have to pass before they enter upon that rest which remains for the people of God.

Now, doubtless, many have used these symbols, parrot-like, simply because they heard other people use them; and, of course, nothing can be more wearisome than such mindless repetitions. One gets tired at last of hearing about type and anti-type, Egypt and Bethel, Jordan and Pisgah, when never so little cant or blind custom mingle with the words. Nevertheless, the use made of the Hebrew history by the

Christian Church was founded on a true instinct, and was not a mere fashion or habit; for nations are but vast aggregates of individual men and women. Whatsoever of good or of evil, of prosperity or adversity, of hope or despondency, of sin and suffering, or of virtue and achievement, is displayed in a nation, is but a colossal type of that which befalls the single man or woman, with this great advantage added, that nations live long enough to show us the final result of any given course of action.

Says Alison in his History of Europe, "The punishment of the sins of individuals is not always confined to this life; but nations have no immortality, and therefore their retribution has to be completed in this world." 'Tis a great truth, but very badly stated. 'Tis as if he said that, since nations have no immortality, God had to alter his great laws of retribution to suit their case. But the wheels of God's justice go on, unhasting, unresting, slackening not to save, nor hastening to punish: —

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small.

Though with patience stands he waiting, with exactness grinds he all."

The truth is that not always in the brief span of a single life has the orbit of God's retribution time to come round full circle; but in the life of a nation there is time enough for many revolutions. It is for this reason that we have to remand to eternity the answer to the riddle of many a life, of the prosperous oppressor and the crushed slave, the seducer and his

victim, the injurer and the wronged, the slanderer and the slandered, the vulgar success and the seeming failure. But a wise student of history can prophesy beforehand the retribution that will surely come, the payment to the uttermost farthing that each individual will have at last to make; for his studies teach him the amazing exactitude of that law which acts upon both nations and individuals, and which, in the case of nations, stands clear as sunlight.

'Tis equally true of the law which rewards the right. The final vindication of many a brave soul's integrity must be waited for till the great award elsewhere. Many a sweet life shall one day shine as a star which in all this mortal life was hidden in darkness. But history is full of these grand awards to nations. God crowns his victorious nations with diadems so bright that they gleam upon our eyes through the darkness of centuries. In history, then, as in the book of fate, we read our own destiny. But some one will say: "Why the history of Israel so specially? Your principle will apply to any nation." True. All nations have a sacred history; that is, a history viewed from the lofty summits of the soul, with the cardinal points of right and wrong kept ever in sight, the history of the relations of that nation's soul with its God. Such a Bible could be written of any great nation, and would be full of deepest, most tragic significance. It would have its songs of triumph, its words of warning, its prophecy of good and of evil, its divine guidance, its retribution, its rewards; and it becomes every nation so to read its own history, so to write its Bible of God's dealings with it.

But, up to this date, the Israelites are the only people who, from first to last, saw their history from the standpoint of the soul, and wrote with right and wrong as the key-note. To the Israelitish historians the all-important thing in a king is not whether he warred or built or planted, was victorious or vanquished, but whether he did good or evil in the sight of the Lord. The all-important thing in a period was not whether the men of that day were rich or powerful or prosperous or even happy, as men count happiness, but whether they did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with their God. This is the reason, then, why we have still to go back to Israel to learn the grand style of writing history, to learn to see all events in the light of heaven.

I have taken as illustration only one grand series, which begins with Egypt and ends with the Promised Land; but, that once gained, a new series of symbols begins. The various steps of subduing that Promised Land open up a new aspect of the soul's struggle in time, the struggle against foes within. I will not draw out the analogy at length, but take as my text the one I have already quoted: "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." Many a hard-fought battle has been won, many a long march has been travelled over, many a city has fallen, many a people conquered; yet the task so well begun is not yet ended. "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed"; and so Joshua has to map out to each tribe its appropriate place and work, that the final conquest may be at last completed.

I have singled out this passage because I think that



this moment in the history of Israel typifies quite accurately the present stage in the history of the Christian Church. She, too, has had her Egypt, her Red Sea of persecution, her weary wandering through the wilderness of the Middle Ages; but she is now, in some sort, in possession of the land. Let us see whether the comparison will hold good.

I. The Israelites still had heathen among them, who still stubbornly resisted, sometimes even getting the better of them and enslaving them for a season. The reason why these internal foes took them such a long time to subdue was because the bond of national unity was weak, while the tribal bond was strong. Ephraim envied Judah, and Judah vexed Ephraim. Benjamin looked out for himself. Issachar was even mean enough to pay tribute to the Phœnicians. Reuben tarried by his sheep-folds, and was soon lost among the tribes of the desert. Instead of fighting together the common enemy, they often stood by, and saw their brothers stricken down. Nay, too often they poured out their life-blood in fratricidal strife. No wonder, then, that the enemies of Israel abode yet in the land.

Alas! how true a picture this is of the Church of our own days! How little sense there is of the common unity of Christendom! How strong the tribal bond is compared to the great universal bond! 'Tis good to love one's tribe, one's special church, 'tis good to defend its territory against all foes without and within; but it is also good to have a grand absorbing love of the great Church Universal, the holy Church throughout all the world.

How much precious strength is wasted in fratricidal strife! How hard it is to get Christians to band together in any good work! To this day narrow-minded Catholics actually feel it a duty to ignore their fellow-Christians. They feel that, if they acknowledged them as brothers, members in good standing of the holy Church Universal, they would be doing grievous wrong to the one only Church which Christ founded. While such pretensions exist on their side, it is impossible to have a cordial and hearty Christian co-operation. They do not know it. They do not mean it to be so; but all outside their pale see that such exclusive claims are wretched conceit and presumption, and must be trodden under foot before Catholic unity can possibly be attained.

On the other hand, 'tis sad to see the bitter, wholesale denunciations of the Romish Church of which almost all Protestant sects have been guilty. To how many is Rome Babylon and the mother of abominations! While such foul names are flung about by earnest, if narrow Protestants, what hope of reconciliation? So distorted is the average Protestant vision, when the Roman Catholic Church is looked at, that the simplest deeds of divinest charity are suspected; and help is coldly withdrawn from the sick and afflicted, because, I suppose, it is a dangerous thing to have any one cured of scarlet fever by a Catholic nurse. Such a disposition would criticise the good Samaritan himself.

I say nothing of the minor contests between sect and sect, bitter as these often are; but I simply say that, while the Christian Church is thus distracted,

torn, and divided within itself, there is small hope of driving the heathen out of the land by a grand united effort of all who love the Lord. Could we but see all the members of the whole Christian Church cordially recognizing each other, and cordially co-operating in all those great reforms and charities which should be common to all the churches, united as one man in spreading education, founding libraries, encouraging art and science, setting together the example of plain living and high thinking, banding together to form one grand united Christian public opinion, how heathendom would quail before it! How intemperance, gambling, lust, knavery, political and general scoundrelism, would fear and quake in their dens! Could Christendom thus band together to-morrow, it would bring the millennium nearer by a thousand years!

Christianity is the rightful leader of society; but, oh, how much of land there remaineth to be possessed!

But, II. Christianity has not only not got full possession of society. It has not yet got a full grasp of its own ideas. It took Israel hundreds of years fully to understand herself.

1. There remaineth yet very much of the idea of God to be possessed. All Christendom has in its creed a God infinitely powerful, wise, and good, the just and tender Lover of men's souls, the Father, Guardian, and Guide of all the children of time.

But how few Christians even begin to take in the stupendous magnificence of this divine conception! I pass by all the perversions of the grand doctrine by

cruel creeds, though these have hurt and wounded millions, and have been the fatal means of blinding them to the light of God. But, I ask, how many Christians realize at all adequately this surrounding Presence, whose subtle thought pervades the very air that surrounds our minds, this brooding Spirit, whose infinite heart enwraps the race as the earth is wrapped on all sides by the soft atmosphere? Who in all the world as yet is accustomed to the presence of God? Who sees all things in God and God in all things? Who lives from God as naturally and as surely as he breathes?

2. There remaineth yet very much of the idea of God's purpose toward the human race to be possessed.

Far away in heaven this dark seeming earth is seen to shine, a sweet, bright, heavenly star. The angels behold it steeped in heavenly light. They see, what too often we do not, that the splendor of God is the light that shines on our world. They see that, if once all the dwellers on earth could together open their eyes to the light, all men together would know that we were living in the midst of God. But this blindness is not to last forever. It is in the everlasting purpose of God that, at last, his kingdom shall come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. But the vision is for many days. It is a hope to be passed on from generation to generation. Joseph dies in Egypt; but, dying, he says, "Behold I die; but God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry my bones into the land he swore to our fathers." Moses dies in sight of the Promised Land, on which he is never to set foot; but he bids Joshua be strong, and of a

good courage, and to lead the people on. Joshua dies, and leaves still much land to be possessed; but he gathers the princes of Israel together, and solemnly adjures them to carry on the work till at last the land is all their own.

And so it is with the grander promise made to the heart of man by the Maker of man's heart. The splendid hope has to be intrusted, a sacred legacy, by each generation to the one that comes after it. The promise toward which the whole creation groans and travails until now is that on this earth the mystic temple of the Highest shall at last be builded, and that the whole race of mankind shall enter into its courts, and together worship there. The promise is that a day shall come when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea, when no man shall say to his neighbor, Know the Lord; for all shall know him, from the least to the greatest. But this blessed hope and promise is to be made a reality only by the conscious co-operation of the mind and will of man with the mind and will of God, and many a thousand years must pass away ere all be fulfilled. The task has to be handed down from generation to generation before the promise is gained at last. Each man and woman at last must help.

As with man in general, so with the individual brother or sister. There remains yet very much of your own character to be possessed. The Israelites had to conquer their land from the heathen, inch by inch. You and I have to subdue our hearts in the same way. Do you say how? First do as they

did. Have a grand aim, nothing short of the possession of the whole Land of Promise. Let us form a lofty ideal of ourselves first. Let us look earnestly at the divine portrait of our far-off possible, which even now hangs in the picture gallery of heaven, — our own likeness, as God sees it, — and then let us proceed to realize it, bit by bit. How realize it? By acting, thinking, aspiring as our ideal self would. It is the eternal law that power is born of use. Study mathematics, and you gain power in mathematics. Think, and you will become thoughtful. Forbear, and you will become forbearing. Keep on doing merciful acts, and you shall become merciful. Do courteous things, and at last the very soul of courtesy shall inhabit your breast. Keep on doing loving things, and your heart shall at last be wholly loving and lovely. Keep on conquering yourself, and at last you shall be absolute master of yourself. A quaint person once said that Nature herself must have got the power to make such perfect sunsets by the incessant practice she had in making sunsets. Keep on letting the light of God shine into this, that, and the other act, thought, or feeling, and at last through you God's full glory shall shine, and man shall look on your face as if it were the face of an angel; for it would indeed be an angel's face.

But, you say, I need God's inspiration to do all that. Very true, but that is the way to get God's inspiration. Through the loving deed, the merciful thought, the high resolve, God enters, and takes possession of your breast. Open your lungs, and in comes the air. Open your soul, and in comes the

Spirit. Shall we not, then, together say, "Forgive, O loving Spirit, all the selfish deeds wherewith I have so often grieved Thee, all the sad indolence and worldliness by which I have so often quenched the flame of Thine inspiration, all the fretfulness, the anger, the hard and evil thoughts and desires which have so often caused Thee to sorrow over the wilful waywardness of Thy child? Make me more like Thee. May I love as Thou lovest, aspire to help Thee to bear the weary load of a sinful earth! Nevermore may I add an atom to the weight of sin that must be lifted off the souls of men before Thy glory can shine out upon the earth. Father in heaven, make me a partner of Thy divine labors. May I rejoice, even as Jesus rejoiced, to do Thy will! May I forbear with all my brothers and sisters for Thy sake, as he forbore! May my heart be full of Thy divine compassion, even as his earth. May every thought of mine be brought at last into captivity to Thine everlasting law of love!"







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THE UNITARIAN WAY IN RELIGIOUS CULTURE

BY

JOSEPH MAY

Pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia

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SERIES II

MARCH 12, 1893

No. 18

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C.

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# THE UNITARIAN WAY IN RELIGIOUS CULTURE.

A SERMON FOR YOUNG PERSONS.

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“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.”—MATT. vii. 21.

I WILL to-day preach a sermon (perhaps introductory to another\*) which I address especially to the young persons who may chance to hear me. Very often I have had evidences of a certain perplexity of mind which the young among us suffer through an imperfect understanding of the system of religious training under which they are brought up, of its theory and its justifications. They may *feel* it to have been wholesome and rational; but when, abroad, it is brought into contrast with other systems and its habits with the habits of those others, when they are challenged by companions to explain it or even describe it, they find themselves at a loss. They do not feel so well acquainted with it as their companions seem to be with theirs. Moreover, when they appeal to their parents and friends, they often find that *they* do not help them much. These older people often appear somewhat halting and uncertain in

\*This sermon was actually followed by one on Unitarian Principles and another on Unitarian Doctrines, which may have supplied some apparent deficiencies in it.

their religious ideas. They believe in God, in man's spiritual nature, in the wise and benevolent ordering of life, in goodness, in the hope of ultimate welfare and perfection. They do *not* believe in a Triune God, nor in vicarious atonement, nor in eternal, in the sense of everlasting, punishment for sin; but, when it comes to details, they seem to express themselves vaguely. They are by no means so certain and confident as their orthodox neighbors are. They have no creed, no confessions of faith to fall back on and to point their children to. But what is most marked is that they do not seem to *feel much interest* in points of doctrine. They are reverent, faithful to duty, charitable, loving; and yet they are contented, apparently, with a very simple set of religious views, and care little to elaborate these. They betray no anxiety lest error on speculative points should work them serious harm.

On the contrary, the members of other churches, at least the earnest and faithful ones, appear very certain and definite in their opinions on religious subjects. They have them fully expressed in creeds and articles of belief. They can tell you something which is definite (whether profound and correct or not) about the Bible, about Deity, about Jesus, salvation, future punishments. At any rate, and especially, they regard it as highly important *to have* correct views on these points. They betray the feeling that those who reject the orthodox scheme are perverse and even sinful. They are somewhat impatient with those who seem in doubt about the doctrines of religion. Their children catch something of their dogmatic certitude;

and, with the frankness of youth, they often press it home on our children to justify their not believing as they do, and call upon them to rehearse a corresponding schedule of opinions. And our youth (so does the idea that there is *merit* in assenting to doctrinal standards permeate Christian thought) feel at a disadvantage, and as if they were at fault when they cannot as freely and distinctly express the faith which is in them.

Now, while I would not gloze over nor excuse in the least any defect in our prevailing habits in the culture of the young or in respect of our own thinking, I yet want to throw some light on the causes of this difference between us and other sects, so that you who are young may not be led to do injustice to yourselves or to your parents as to the religious system which they and I trust, nor mistakenly yearn for some things which seem attractive, yet which are really delusive.

Let me say, then, first, that you may be sure that all such general facts grow out of some underlying idea or reason; and the reason which underlies this habit of seemingly vague thought, this apparent indifference to doctrine, which sometimes seem to you to prevail among our people, the reason that you find yourselves ill-prepared to meet and cope with your young orthodox friends, is that Unitarianism is *not* primarily and chiefly a system of doctrines, but of principles; and so your parents, your older friends, the influential people in our own church and other Unitarian churches, have not been so careful to inform you about doctrines, or even to inform themselves,

and themselves to speculate and discuss doctrinal points, as they have been to establish and inculcate principles.

I do not say they have always observed a strictly just mean in this respect. It is human to run to extremes, and our people may have sometimes erred in undervaluing doctrines and in neglecting to teach doctrines. They may sometimes have failed justly to appreciate the value and necessity of forms and rites in religious culture and of definite habits of devotion and of religious training. I think they *have* so failed in some degree, although less of late years. But I want you to see what they have *meant to do*, what their idea has been, their theory of the matter, so that you may understand their position and your own, and not do injustice to them or yourselves, even if in the coming generation you should in some respects modify or correct the habits of your predecessors.

Let me try to make this plainer. What is a principle, and what is a doctrine? A principle is some truth of which a man has become so fully convinced, both that it is true and that it is important, that he adopts it as a practical rule of conduct or thought. It is his starting-point, his basis, his law of life in action or thinking. Your principles are the practical rules on which you act. For example, truthfulness is a principle, temperance a principle, reverence a principle; respect for others' rights, for the public welfare, for propriety, is a principle. In matters of thinking, the right of private judgment, the supreme authority of conscience, the superiority of character to mere profession, of life to any opinions,

are principles. These are convictions with which one *starts in doing his thinking*. They govern his habits of thought and mould his feelings about opinions.

On the other hand, a doctrine is a view or opinion *held by the mind* about something, without reference to any practical application. Literally, it means something which is taught. In science the word "theory" is used in a corresponding way. Thus the doctrine of God is that view, or theory, of God which a church or an individual believes and upholds. It is what the Catholic Church or the Protestant Church, the Trinitarian Church or the Unitarian Church, teaches about Deity. The Trinitarian doctrine of God is that he exists in three Persons, which are all one Person. The Unitarian doctrine of God is that God is spirit, and of his mode of personal existence we can say no more; that certainly we can *not* say he is three-Persons-in-One, for that is not mysterious, properly, but only absurd and contrary to reason. The Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation is that salvation is secured through the reception of the sacraments of the Church. The orthodox Protestant doctrine is that salvation is to be secured through the merits of Christ, transferred to the believer through faith in the efficacy of his sacrifice on the cross. The Unitarian doctrine of salvation is that it consists in character, and is therefore to be secured by watchfulness and fidelity in duty, by a right spiritual relation to God.

Thus, you see, a principle is some truth adopted as a practical working standard and basis of action. A



doctrine is some view of truth, some opinion about any great fact *held abstractly*. A principle lives within the heart, as we say, in the conscience. After a while it becomes almost an instinct, a part of character. A doctrine exists without. It takes a literary form. It is written in books, in creeds. It is known and accepted by the *mind*. The *doctrine* of God is all that we know or believe about him. Your *principles* in relation to God are whatever you *feel* about him, whatever rules of life the knowledge of God leads you to follow.

And I repeat, as the most important thing for you clearly to understand and feel, that Unitarianism is primarily and characteristically a system of principles, while Orthodoxy is, as the name implies, a system of beliefs. Of course, Unitarianism has its doctrines, as even its name would suggest; and I claim that its doctrines are actually far more rational, intelligible, consistent, natural, complete, and even, in most respects, more Scriptural than those of Orthodoxy. Unitarian doctrines meet the great problems of divine and human being and relations, in my opinion, far more fully, reasonably, inspiringly, than Orthodoxy does. They are maintained and held on different principles; but they are not at all vague and not at all uncertain on the great main points of religion and theology;—no more so than are those of the orthodox.

Moreover (although here is where we have characteristically been deficient), Unitarians recognize the *importance* of doctrines,—*i.e.*, of correct opinion properly attained and presented; and, in whatever

ways are consistent with our principles, we take pains to disseminate our doctrines. It is our manifest duty to form the most intelligent opinions we can, and to offer to others every view of truth which we attain and come to trust.

So, also (while here the common style of orthodox preaching has grossly and almost sinfully erred, disparaging character and the sources of it in principle), yet practically the disciples of Orthodoxy recognize the necessity of principles, and some of them preach them faithfully and nobly. And they inculcate them in their children, and try to make their youth good and noble. But, comparing the two systems as such, every intelligent orthodox person would say, as I do, that the characteristic of Unitarianism is that in it principles are the main thing, and the characteristic of Orthodoxy is that in it doctrines are the main thing.\*

Now, you can see why the young people in orthodox churches are trained so differently and, as you perhaps think, so much more carefully than you seem to be; for the object which Unitarian parents have before them is very different from that which is cherished by orthodox parents, and so their ways, their habits, and all their methods must be and are very different. The principle underlying Orthodoxy is this: that the belief of a certain scheme of doctrines is essential to salvation. The principle underlying Unitarianism is

\*An intelligent and candid orthodox minister once admitted to me that, if all he knew of two persons was that one had received an orthodox and the other a Unitarian training, he should expect the latter to be morally the better, because, as he said, that is what we Unitarians aim at especially, while the orthodox aim, primarily, at doctrinal thoroughness and accuracy.

that the great object of life is character. So the purpose of either is different from that of the other,—their main purpose, I mean, the purpose which governs and moulds and distinguishes what they do for their children.

The good Unitarian father and mother feel especially anxious that their children should imbibe good principles, correct views of life, to be the guides and source of worthy character. The earnestly orthodox father and mother are especially anxious that theirs should early understand the scheme of salvation, should get the idea distinctly that Jesus is their Saviour, and believe that only through him can they attain heaven or even be secure from sin now. The devoted Unitarian parent watches his children for the tokens of good character, to see whether they are inclined to be truthful, pure, generous, manly, religious in spirit and disposition; that they are taking right views of life, which will lead them to be noble, useful men and women, religious in spirit and conduct. The faithful orthodox parent anxiously watches the progress of his children in knowledge of the Bible; looks for signs of their early conversion; signs that their hearts are full of devotion to Jesus, that they are becoming interested in the public services of religion, that they respect the Sabbath, and are regular in private devotional exercises.

I do not again say that either party are strictly *confined* to the one course or the other, but that the one course is *characteristic* of Unitarianism and the other is *characteristic* of Orthodoxy. The good Unitarian may be and, if really wise, will be anxious to give his

children the elements of sound thought about the principal subjects of theology, to suggest the idea of God and explain on what grounds our faith in his existence is founded, and similar points; and the good orthodox parent will equally try to cultivate good character in his. But the *emphasis* will be different, and the general character and method of their training will be different, because of this fundamental difference in their main purpose.

Now let us note more particularly what the difference will be and actually is.

Let me first tell you that Unitarianism arose much under the influence of a *reaction*. People had long suffered much from the oppressions of creeds and systems of belief; that is, had been subjected to annoyance and pain of mind and social and religious exclusion because of honest doubts and differences of opinion. They had seen how unjust and cruel this is. They had come to feel how wrong it is; that the whole *method* is wrong. They had seen how very shallow and superficial much that is called belief is, when secured according to the methods of Orthodoxy; that it is often a mere assent to propositions which one has not examined or understood, and even *could not* examine or understand. They had seen (as you may still see) people repeating creeds of which they really did not comprehend the contents, or, if they did, had by no means *so* investigated the subjects involved as to have any *real* opinions about them. They had seen often bad, cruel, unjust men standing high in the church and society, because they professed strict correctness of belief, and were very sedulous in going to

church and prayer-meetings, in keeping fast-days and Sundays, and making long prayers at home. They had seen others suspected and persecuted, placed at disadvantage even in business, and made uncomfortable in society, for opinions honestly entertained, when their lives were pure and noble, full of the spirit of Jesus, and full of real devotion and piety towards God.

Thus many began to feel strongly *just the other way*. Strictness of belief came to be associated with hypocrisy and uncharity. If a man was very zealous about his creed, they almost inclined to suspect something might be wrong in his life, which he was compounding for and covering up. They doubted the utility of devotional forms and religious exercises, through fear lest they should become substitutes for righteousness, and so deceive and mislead people. In all these feelings they had great sanction from Jesus, whose preaching is full of stern objections against precisely similar evils arising in his time from precisely similar causes.

Thus, I say, early Unitarians, and indeed our body always, have been a good deal under the influence of a *reaction* against a different system. Such an influence is always somewhat dangerous, apt to make us extreme the other way and sometimes unjust. I confess that, among us, it has led in many instances to an undue distrust of doctrinal thought and culture and to an undue suspicion and disuse of religious forms and rites. Nevertheless, as I have intimated, it certainly did not prevent our predecessors from elaborating a very broad, complete, and, in the main,

reasonable body of theological doctrines, nor did it lead them, as a body, to renounce a reasonable diligence in devotional and general religious practices; but it did make them extremely sensitive to the rights of individual men in respect to opinion in religion. They felt no wrong to be so great as that which may be inflicted on the mind, and they were even *excessively* careful to avoid overruling the conclusions and opinions to which any individual honestly came. Many have hardly been willing to make known their own doctrinal opinions to their children, for fear of unduly and unfairly influencing them.

Now, we have gradually subsided from this extreme condition of things, in a great measure, and yet its effects remain. And so the difference, which I was going to point out, between your parents' ways and those of an orthodox family is substantially this. Your parents, looking mainly to the cultivation of your characters, trust very largely to general influences and to incidental opportunities and means of educating you. They say to themselves: "Religion is a thing of *life*, not of opinion and form. The religious man or woman is the good, the righteous, the godly, the Christly man or woman. What we want, then, is, first of all things, to have our children *good*. The rest will come in time. If they are good and sensible, well-disposed, and have good views of life, when, in the course of their experience, specific religious questions naturally come before them, they will then take them up healthfully, and enter into them genuinely. *Character* is the essence of religion. Doctrinal study may or may not conduce to it. Minute

doctrinal study may or may not lead to the healthful development of true opinions and beliefs. At all events, it is secondary."

Then they say, too, and very justly, that the difficult questions of theology, such as the mode of God's existence, the nature of Jesus, what revelation is, what inspiration is, salvation, miracle, and other things involved in the orthodox system, are abstractly beyond the genuine reach of young minds. They can be religious in disposition and feeling. They can have right sentiments. But they cannot have genuine opinions about abstruse doctrinal points while they are still immature and inexperienced.

So, I say, your parents (instinctively, if not deliberately) trust mainly to the *general influences* under which you grow up. They consider the effect of their own example. They try to regulate your associations. They are particular about your schools. They watch what you read. They try to make your homes happy and wholesome. If they are thoughtful about your religious development, they attend to this incidentally rather than formally; that is, they watch for favorable occasions to suggest religious principles and ideas instead of imposing many religious tasks upon you. They are careful not to make religion a burthen, not to forestall the healthful development of your genuine opinions. They teach you to reverence God by the way they speak of Him, even by the reserve which forbids their too freely and glibly referring to Him and to other sanctities.

On the other hand, the parents of your orthodox friends, either with intelligent purpose or from the

habit of their associations, are naturally more attentive to formal methods. Their main and principal underlying purpose, that which gives peculiar shape and direction to their habits, is not, remember, to build up character in their children. So far as they are faithful and consistent with their system, their main purpose is, as I said before, to insure the acceptance by their children of a system of opinions. Even among those who are not wholly consistent, this purpose moulds and colors their modes of educating their children; and especially it inspires and shapes the innumerable agencies which the churches and the clergy sustain and manage, and which reach out to and take in almost all the young of orthodox families. This purpose permits and requires a great deal of systematic instruction. Doctrines cannot be thoroughly taught *incidentally*. They are not to be communicated in a *general* way, by *general* influences, as character is moulded, as sentiments may be instilled. The natural growth of genuine religious ideas may be promoted so, but particular doctrines must be taught definitely on express occasions. They are subjects for the *mind* to work over. Just what they are and how they are supported must be made known to the mind by express lessons. Hence the character of orthodox Sunday-schools, and hence even a great part of their outward success. A true Unitarian Sunday-school ought, perhaps, to be a sort of children's church, its exercises adapted chiefly to touch the feelings and cultivate the sentiments of reverence and piety and love. An orthodox one may well be a *school*, much like a day-school; for its fundamental



object is similar, to convey to the *minds* of the young certain particular and definite information, to impress upon their minds certain particular theories. Hence, also, the orthodox system permits and requires catechisms and books of that sort. The children must early begin to learn the creeds and recite doctrinal statements, to make sure they are thoroughly instructed in these.

Further, the genius of the orthodox system, the ultimate purpose of which is to secure an outward benefit salvation from punishment; (not salvation from sin); which aims to control the minds of individuals and overrule their natural workings; naturally invites, besides this express doctrinal teaching, much else that is outward and formal. As no one would ever by any chance come to know such elaborate and unnatural doctrines unless he were expressly taught them, so people would very soon *forget* the whole system if they were not continually refreshed in their recollection of it by preaching and by the various services which are founded on it and express it. Hence the orthodox church consistently multiplies religious meetings, and cultivates the feeling that there is a certain merit in going to them. It conducts a ritual more elaborate and gorgeous, as in the Catholic Church or in the High Church Episcopal, or more simple and natural, as in the Low Church Episcopal, but all of it full of doctrinal suggestions, confessions, and professions. It has zealously maintained an austere Sabbath, which Jesus so vehemently protested against. In large part, it keeps various penitential seasons, especially one called Lent, occupying several weeks. It maintains

with great care sacramental rites, like baptism, the Eucharist, confirmation, and extreme unction. I do not by any means say that all these things are unnatural and necessarily bad. On the contrary, properly used, moderately used, and used with proper conception of their nature and right purpose, many of them are valuable and even necessary. A reasonable ritual is very useful. The Lord's Supper, rightly understood, is a beautiful and helpful rite, which Unitarians in time past have dearly loved, and very many still love. I love it and use it, and I regret that so many have lost a just interest in it. The rite of baptism, properly interpreted, is beautiful. I often wish we had some such service, also, as that of confirmation.

But what I am trying now to do is to recall to your attention the essential and peculiar importance which our orthodox friends attach to these formal exercises, and to have you see that the reason they do so is that by them their elaborate and artificial system of doctrinal education is maintained and conducted. Some of these agencies are, as I say, rational and wholesome, when properly regulated and inspired. They may take their place happily in a natural system of religious culture, as *helps* to religious feeling, as elements in rational worship. But forms, ceremonies, professions, fasts, are *essential* to such a system of doctrinal education as Orthodoxy; and that system instinctively and necessarily encourages them as meritorious. Her people get to feel that these outward things are not merely helps, but actual virtues. It was so in the days of Jesus; and it has been so

ever since, though no doubt it is less so now than ever before.

Now, of course, the result of such a system of culture is that those who are brought up in it "know what they believe," and can tell it to you at a given moment much more definitely and much more glibly than those can do who have been brought up under ours. They can recite the catechism and creed readily, and can perhaps explain to you all the details of the "scheme of salvation." Naturally enough, when they challenge you to do the same sort of thing, you are puzzled. You have not had any such training.

Now, here again, as I have already done, candor compels me to confess that in my opinion you ought, many of you, to have had *more* careful instruction in religious matters than you have had. As the orthodox have deeply erred on the side of excess, I must confess that we have often erred in this matter on the side of deficiency. Too many of our Unitarian children are left to grow up with a very inadequate religious training. I grant that a large proportion of you *ought* to be able to explain better than you can the ideas which your parents, and even yourselves, actually cherish, and which actually underlie your education and your characters. Of this I would gladly speak at some other time.

But, granting you had had the most careful training according to our Unitarian principles, I want you to see that still you could not, with the confidence and distinctness which characterize your orthodox friends, rehearse *in form* the elements of your belief.

The purpose of your education has not been to provide you with doctrinal statements, but with principles, with sentiments, in short with *character*. The great truths of religion with which you have not failed to become, even unconsciously, acquainted, are few and simple, though grand. God, man's spiritual nature, immortality, the obligation of rectitude, human brotherhood,—these are about all. *These are about all Jesus had to teach the people of Judea.*

But what we care for, after all, is not that you should be able to *talk* very freely about these great truths, but that you should really *feel* them. And we know that *deep* feeling on even these important points is not to be looked for in most young people. What we hope is that we have *started* you rightly, that you have some *genuine* feeling and as much as is usually consistent with the simple experience of life which is all you have had so far. But, again, and always, and above all, that your *principles* are right, that you *respect religion*, that you *desire truth*, that you are sincere, modest, reverent, receptive, faithful, ready, industrious, unworldly, pure, true.

Now, with all respect for the sincere convictions and purposes and habits of those from whom we differ, and fully alive to the defects which have characterized our own people, and do still characterize them, I do not hesitate to urge on any of you who feel at all a want in this system under which you have been brought up *not hastily to doubt* the wisdom and soundness of its intention and aim. I do not hesitate to assure you that, after some observation, and indeed after some experience of the feelings which I not infre-

quently note in some of yourselves,—that desire for more specific education in opinion, for more elaborate devotional forms, for something of that confidence in themselves and their methods which your young orthodox friends have,—I say I do not hesitate to assure you that, after all, *I feel very sure our system is essentially sound.* I believe you will hereafter rejoice to have been brought up under it. I believe it *aims* at the right thing. I am very sure it conforms to the natural, God-given laws of the mind. It is far more spiritual. It is far more in harmony with the best spirit and teachings of the Bible, with the spirit of the Prophets and Psalmists, and especially of *Jesus*. With all these religion is a thing of life, of character, of principle, infinitely *more* than it is a thing of doctrine and belief. The orthodox system of opinions has certainly its germ in the Messianic claims of Jesus, and in the ideas of Paul; but its bulk and strength and the whole character of the orthodox system of religious education are an outgrowth of that speculative philosophy, born in Greece, which seized upon Christianity almost at its birth, misconceived its essence, misplaced its emphasis, perverted and misdirected it.

What we want, then, to do is to bring out the real truth of our system, to supply its defects, and correct the errors into which everything human is prone to lapse. This you and your parents and I are under bonds to do. This you may do each for himself. This we all ought to be doing. But let me warn you not to be misled by the satisfaction which persons very easily gain from having strictly defined systems of

belief and from great punctuality in attention to outward forms. That satisfaction is very apt to come (I do not say it always comes, but *it is very apt to come*) from the *substitution of a lower standard of requirements* for the exalted demands of true spiritual religion. It is much easier to accept systematic beliefs than it is to adopt into your heart real religious principles. It is much easier to keep fasts, to make long prayers, to pronounce creeds solemnly, and to bow decorously at the *name* of Jesus, than it is to be unselfish, unworldly, humble, merciful, patient, gentle, truly receptive of the spirit of God, and a true follower of Jesus's *example*. True religion shall surely at last bring peace; but it also very, very often, and especially in the opening stages of religious life, such as some of you may find yourselves in, brings a deep *unrest*. It brings dissatisfaction with yourself and your attainments. It brings the uneasiness of spiritual hunger. Read any of the lives of the saints, of religious men in all ages, read only the biographies of Jesus and Saint Paul, and you will learn this.

And in this state of unrest the most dangerous of all things are *spiritual opiates*. Beware of these. *Beware of quieting the demands of your religious nature by anything external or formal!* Beware of substituting anything for character! Beware of calling Jesus "Lord, Lord," and failing to do the things he said! Beware of supposing that God will care much for your uttermost correctness of opinion about Him if He does not discern in you the deep spirit, the exacting principles of true religion! Even the saintly devotee, Thomas à Kempis, says, "What will it avail thee to

discourse learnedly concerning the Trinity if thou hast not *love*, and art therefore displeasing to the Trinity?"

So, then, to sum up, when you find yourselves brought into contact and contrast with your young orthodox friends, if you find in them a genuine religious spirit, *catch all of it you can*. If their habits of devotion engender in them a real religious life, *imitate* them, carefully watching the spirit of your own. But, in respect to opinions, remember that their standard and whole system are different from ours, and you cannot expect to respond to them. The only opinions your parents and your pastor much care for are such as you shall, in due season, individually and independently come to by your own study, reflection, observation and experience. You are still too young to have developed these very far; but, if you have caught a gleam of the great truth of God; if the consciousness of His being stirs in you, controls you, helps you even a little; if you are coming to a spiritual self-consciousness, if the sanctity of the right awes and inspires you; have confidence, though in all modesty and humility, that you are making a beginning. And, oh! by the goodness of God, by all that is holy and happy, *guard* that beginning of spiritual life and cultivate it,—guard it as the pearl of great price; cultivate it as the little seed, which, if tended and watered by your care and pains, your prayers and labor, shall one day overshadow your lives with refreshment, and nourish them with eternal strength!







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RIGHTEOUSNESS IN GOD AND IN  
MAN IDENTICAL

BY

THOMAS R. SLICER

Minister of the Church of our Father, Buffalo, N.Y.

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## RIGHTEOUSNESS IN GOD AND IN MAN IDENTICAL.

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“Righteousness shall go before Him, and shall set us in the way of His steps.”— PSALM lxxxv. 13.

IN that conflict which throughout the ancient history of the Jewish people appears to have been waged between the infidelity of the people and the fidelity of the prophet there were struck out principles of living so deep in their insight, so strong in their utterance, and so immutably true that the only sufficient explanation which has ever been offered concerning them is that they were the movement of Divine Wisdom through human thought and speech. It is not saying too much when we claim for such utterances inspiration. It is claiming too little, if we accord to these deliverances of spiritual wisdom all the inspiration in the world. “The Spirit breatheth where it will. Thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth,” is the statement of an inspiration as wide as the human mind. And yet in the Jewish race, which bred prophets as its natural progeny, and “of whom according to the flesh Christ came,” there was a genius for religion, and a responsiveness to the breath of the Spirit which places its scriptures pre-eminently above those of any other people. If this

susceptibility had not been a fact, then Christ would have come of some other race. The advent of the Saviour of men is neither the result of divine edict nor the issue of a scheme or system.

The measure of inspiration, however, is not alone in the soul of Him who utters the truth of inspiration. It must be also sought in the soul of him who hears. The measure of inspiration is the measure of its effect in process of transmission. Christianity, with all its defects in practice, is a greater marvel than any records in the Gospels over which we stumble. "By their fruits ye shall know them," is the test of principles of growth, when they blossom and bear their fruit. I have indulged in these general statements, attracted to them by the far-reaching wisdom of the text, "Righteousness shall go before Him [the Eternal], and shall set us in the way of His steps." It is the serene conclusion of a song which celebrates a return from captivity, and prophesies a prosperity which will be the result of righteousness. The captivity had been the result of sin. The restoration to blessedness was to be the crown of virtue. The language of devotion contains no more beautiful celebration of goodness, human and divine: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly. Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him; that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and Righteousness shall look down from heaven.

“Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before Him, and shall set us in the way of His steps.” It was a true poetical religious instinct which incorporated this Psalm in the services of the English Church for Christmas Day. It is a far-off utterance of the voice of Him who cried in the wilderness, along the Jordan Valley, and to the assembled penitents, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” It was curiously misunderstood and misinterpreted when before the humble prophet of Nazareth they broke off the palm branches, and spread them on the road from Olivet. It is true he tolerated the enthusiasm of the common folk, and allowed the shouts of the little children, who proclaimed “a king coming in the name of the Jehovah”; but he gave soon a painful lesson that palms of victory are to commemorate spiritual triumphs, and that, since “the kingdom of God is within,” the highway must be through devout affections. The preparation was to be in righteousness and true holiness. Whenever God comes, that which is much like God has to come first. He finds that which is like Himself. “The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.” Thus the text becomes the statement of that “preparation to meet God” which under so many phases has been ever proclaimed as necessary.

This “way of His steps” is the announcement of faith concerning an immutable will, an inviolable purpose. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death.” No such uncertainty attends the path by which the

infinite thought moves. The confusion of metaphysics concerning "free will and necessity," omniscience and providence, law and love, cannot intrude here. Be sure, if we are caught in this tangle, we have spread the net ourselves. God goes by straight paths. No labyrinth is such to Him who holds the key. If you were to start through the Adirondack wilderness, threading the forest by indistinct trails, crossing the rivers and lakes and ponds, following your guide, who never hesitates nor loses the way, the confidence you would exercise would be entirely destitute of any mental picture of the country traversed, and would be the blessedness of him "who has not seen, and yet has believed"; but the whole mental attitude would change, and be lifted to greater distinctness and vividness of realization, if you should ascend Mt. St. Regis, and see the whole region spread out before you like a picture, with the horizon for a frame. And, as you marked familiar lakes, which you had traversed with the boat, now lying calm like silver basins, and saw the waving woods you had threaded with such difficulty, there would come into your mind the thought of how like these two experiences are to human life in the appeal of its intricacies to faith; and you would also gather a new meaning from that comforting statement, so often quoted without comfort, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." God sees our life from above. We see it too close and too little at a time. The sweeping curve of the earth is a straight line, if viewed too near. Artificial garden paths may

gather new beauty with every turn; but the part from the cottage door across the field is straight as the feet can make it, and so use becomes beauty also. Thus, because he sees so clearly "the end from the beginning," and "knoweth the way that we take," does God send forth the injunction, "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." God would not have the cripple take one step in needless pain. That which is upright commands its centre with most confidence, because it coincides with the centre of the earth. He that is upright, righteous, is sure of his centre, because it coincides with the centre of the heavens. God's ways, "the way of His steps," know neither deflection nor retrogression. The infinite God moves on. Let righteousness go before Him, and let us walk in the way of His steps.

Our apprehension of God must be through moral qualities in ourselves. There is no other means of contact. "The pure in heart shall see God." "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, he cannot love God whom he hath not seen." "As the heavenly, so are they also that are heavenly." These are the terms in which the New Testament writers state that affinity which guarantees communion. Righteousness goes before the approaching Presence, and they who are righteous rally to that company who throng the path by which God comes.

All this may be trite and well known, and it may also be that, oft repeated, it has lost its force; and yet just along this line lies the rescue of these imperilled



times. There are indications that the many efforts to formulate a science of ethics, which takes up so large a share of attention, will find their satisfaction just here; that, after all arguments have been exhausted to prove that there is no means of finding God, we will still address ourselves to duty, as though our search had been successful. When we have declared that the world is actually immoral or at least *unmoral*, we will go on living as though it were a moral world with a moral governor, and we accountable agents of his government. He who spends his powers devising a system of morals must still have a system to live by until his own is finished.

The only and conclusive answer to all objections concerning righteousness is righteousness itself. If God be love, the way of His steps will never be found by the heart of hate. If He be the ideal of benevolence, meanness will never discover His ample purpose through the narrow, winding alley-ways by which a niggardly nature crawls through life. To the rogue all men are dishonest, and to the impure all things are unclean; and, if there were no God save that figment which the imagination forms and the sublime affections inspire with reality, and to which stern duty pays its service, then am I the more bound to conceive an ideal of God which shall tax my fancy to its highest flight, turn my daily love into a sacrament, and make the doing of common duties an act of worship. He who would be sure of God must be sure of himself. No man ever yet realized that the righteousness of God is "like the great mountains," while his own nature afforded no firmer footing than a quak-

ing bog. When he shall appear, we shall be like him, said the disciple who most remembered Jesus. This is as much a command as it is a promise; for only unto such as are like him will he appear.

But there is another and important respect in which this text is true. It is involved in that common objection which is fast impairing the confidence men once felt in prayer. The objection hangs upon this very thought of "the way of his steps," "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow that is cast by turning." And constantly the use of prayer is challenged on the ground that, if God be "so wise that he cannot err," and if the gifts and mercies of His hand follow a law of immutable righteousness, then prayer is as vain as the dash of the sea against the cliffs of the shore. But it cannot be disputed that, if the cliffs stand by the sea, hard, immovable, and unconscious of the beating wave, by the law which made them what they are, no less does the sea dash itself against their hardness, wave upon wave, tide after tide, by law also. The unyielding cliffs have no monopoly of law. There is a law for the sea, also. I desire to register here the conviction that there is no sound life without prayer, and that the impulse which leads a human spirit to pray is as much a law as that which draws a plant toward the light or a falling body to the ground. Our confusion lies in this: that we are trying to represent prayer as the contact of an irresistible force with an immovable body, which is as inconceivable in morals as in mechanics. I desire to draw your attention to a thought other than this, and implore your exercise of a rational faith in

that which lies back of all petition, as the very meaning of prayer and the ground of its exercise; namely, the necessity that the law of our being shall coincide with the law of God. The need is imperative that I shall have the same standard of righteousness as that which I conceive to be in God. Prayer is to be considered as an educator of the will, as an avenue through which man claims the aid of the Eternal Goodness in the struggle to be good. It is of no consequence that I get what I want. It is of the utmost consequence that I want what I ought, and that I shall be what I ought to be; and the whole purpose of prayer is defeated unless it forwards this result. The very urgency of imploring prayer, which opens upon Heaven like a battery, as if to compel a surrender, may be the measure of some pressing need or some agony of heart-breaking trouble; but it is not for that reason religious or fitly called prayer. If your child has a convulsion of pain, you are thankful if, with a sort of blind impulse, it casts itself into your arms, as into a refuge, as it feels this sickness seize it; and yet you would not call that the child's normal state, nor would you simply caress it instead of applying instant remedies. Its condition is wrong. Its state is unnatural. You seek to set it right, and find where nature is attacked. In other words, the child is out of the way by which life and health come; and its writhing torture is the sign of it. Thus is it many a time with what we call our "devotions," which, so far from being devotion, are more likely to be rebellion,—no adoration of the highest, but an utter selfishness and meanness, demanding some gift or relief

with an importunity irreligious. I do not say that we should not ask God for that we would have, but I do say that, beside this reaching out of the hand, the duty is imperative that we seek the aid of the Divine Spirit to make us what we ought to be. Conformity of the will and character to God is the chief use and function of devotion. Communion requires the motion of two lives in the same plane. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" So that no accumulation of blessings which come after the petition, or unasked, can by any possible means be a substitute for blessedness in the inner life. The Beatitudes of Jesus were all addressed to the spiritual nature of man. They were his spiritual discoveries.

I seek to impress upon you to-day the method by which character becomes the preparation to meet God.

Long ago many of you made protest against that teaching which makes such a preparation a sudden and impossible transformation. You need but to be reminded of "the way of His steps," and that preparation to meet God consists in being found in His ways, so that both life's activities and life's devotions, its work and its prayers, mean the same thing, "conformity to His will." "Teach me Thy way, O Lord! I will walk in Thy truth: unite my heart to fear Thy name." This is the prayer which most becomes us when we are uncertain of our path; and, when duty is clear to us, and yet its performance seems to bring only disaster, still "commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass." "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." "Trust in the

Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrances of His holiness." When this passion for goodness commands our whole nature, then shall we know that "hunger and thirst after righteousness" which has been called blessed by Him who was the living, prayerful, loving embodiment of the promise, "Righteousness shall go before God, and shall set us in the way of His steps."

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WEEKLY EXCHANGE

A SERIES OF SERMONS

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP  
THOMAS R. SLICER

JOSEPH MAY  
THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

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A WORD TO THE WISE

BY

THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

Minister of All Souls Church, New York

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SERIES II

MARCH 26, 1893

No. 20

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C.

BOSTON

GEO. H. ELLIS, PUBLISHER, 141 FRANKLIN STREET

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1893

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## A WORD TO THE WISE.

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**"The world by wisdom knew not God."— 1 COR. i. 21.**

THE insufficiency of the reason in matters of religion and morals is, as you are all aware, a fundamental doctrine of all orthodox creeds. We have just heard the conclusion in this city of a trial which charged an eminent scholar with heresy and false doctrine, because, among other doubtful teachings, he had maintained that human reason, apart from the Scriptures and the Church, is a source of spiritual truth for man. If this doubt of reasoning be found in a Protestant community, much clearer and more vigorous is the anti-rational position of the Church of Rome. Yet here, as elsewhere, the Roman theology is more logical, more rational in its attack on reason, than the Protestants generally are; for the Church of Rome does not deny, but most distinctly and reverently affirms, that reason is a divine gift to man. All Catholic philosophy is clear upon this point. The human intellect is no less than an indwelling within us of a divine light, and gives us fellowship in that eternal wisdom by which the worlds were made. By this power men have explored the secrets of nature, and mastered her resistless forces. Art and science,



inventions, discoveries, state-craft, commerce, methods of education, governments, helps, healings, diversities of tongues,—all such triumphs of what is called civilization are won by the use of man's natural reason. The theologians of the Vatican would go, I suppose, as far as you or I in esteeming the importance of these achievements of the free intellect and in praising God, who has given such dominion, but little lower than the angels, to the "Son of Man."

But this natural endowment of reason, it is claimed, is so weak, so unsuccessful, when applied to matters of "faith and morals," that in this sphere some higher guidance is necessary. The mind that can weigh the satellites of Jupiter or invent some marvellous engine may fall into lamentable error when met by a problem of simple right and wrong, or when asked a question concerning the dealings of God with a sinful soul; for these things hath God hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. It is notorious that an illustrious statesman, a prodigy of science, or even an artist, who re-creates the glory of the world, or a poet, who re-echoes nature's loveliest song, may be men who live an evil life, have cold, selfish hearts, and are blind as senseless animals to the beauty of holiness and the mysteries of God. Therefore, says the thoughtful ecclesiastic, it is evident that the wisdom of the world can only render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, but not true worship to God the Father, nor teach us those vital and all-important truths in the knowledge of which standeth our eternal life.

I have put this protest against reason as strongly as

I can, for I believe it to be necessary. Reason is but a part of man; and it leads him into error, not less than passion and blind instinct must. The intellect can exalt man above all other earthly creatures; but it cannot alone lift him up to his birthright as a child of God, or even guide him safely along the common highway of life. I would go as far as Saint Augustine, almost as far as a Jesuit or a Presbyterian, in affirming the inadequacy — nay, the perversion and failure — of the intellect, if trusted alone, as an oracle of faith or as an inspirer of duty, love, and holy living.

You are well aware what ecclesiasticism and Orthodoxy of every type say must be the consequence of admitting the insufficiency of reason in religion and conduct. I can remember that, when I first met this line of reasoning, it almost persuaded me to accept the Churchman's claim of supernatural authority.

I think it very important that we of the unchartered provinces of Christendom should give this argument due weight; for, if it be true that reason is not a sufficient guide of life, who so much in danger as ourselves of going contrary by trusting reason overmuch?

Moreover, unless we understand how limited is the sphere of rationality in life, we shall fail to appreciate the immense success of the prevailing forms of Christianity; for the effect of the Christian Church upon the community is far greater than its hold upon the ideas and the opinions of men, great as that is. It succeeds on account of its splendid discipline and its uplifting appeal to noble affections. The Church does not teach men to think. It teaches them to act

and to love. It is not an academy, not a debating club. It is an army, a family, and a house of prayer; and so the great Christian community, full of error and ignorance, not the least fastidious about consistency, goes on in a masterful way disciplining men to righteous and clean living, and touching their hearts with vague but powerful sentiments of loyalty, pity, reverence, kindness, and self-devotion.

Now, I am so much of a rationalist that I believe truth and right-thinking are the foundation-rock of life, and that all untruth and wrong and careless thinking make men less noble, less steadfast in goodness, and less a power for good, however well-meaning they be.

Nevertheless, I recognize that a foundation is not a building. So, until our rationalism and our liberality do something to strengthen character and warm the heart, they are certainly vain.

Let us consider the points in which Orthodoxy is stronger than we, even where and just because it is less reasonable than we, and let us see what we have to take its place as a guide of life. What, then, does Orthodoxy regard as above reason and better than reason?

First, the Bible. The old-fashioned Christian believes his Bible, every word of it. You and I do not. We claim the right to criticise it, to sift it, to trace in it a many-sided human story. We study the Bible historically, find out why it was ever written and put together at all, and why it is of such varied worth. Now, if after all this higher criticism, we leave the Bible unopened, with clean white pages and dusty

covers, how immense is our loss! If the Bible no longer reveals to us any eternal, divine word, no longer helps us worship the Father, no longer touches our lives with love, trust, and zeal for goodness, no longer reveals inspiring examples of faith and service, then the most unlettered man or woman who ever wept or glowed over the sacred page has something we have not.

My friends, there is nothing to take the place of the Bible as a source of spiritual light and moral enthusiasm. I believe the Bible can stand on its own merits, and needs no prop of superstition to hold it up. I believe the more we understand what those books mean and what they say, the more lovely and venerable they will be. But we cannot be blind to the fact that the habit of Bible-reading is declining. The very freedom and accessibility of the book make against it. There was a time when men shed their blood for the priceless privilege of "reading the Scriptures." Even now men are struggling and suffering abuse and misrepresentation for liberty to study the Bible freely and intelligently. And yet, just as there are people in London who never saw Westminster Abbey, just as there are Swiss who never saw the Matterhorn, as there are Americans who never read our Constitution, so among yourselves, with the Bible in every house, with our hard-won liberty of its use and interpretation, people pass it by, neglect it, and leave their children ignorant of the treasure which is their heritage.

Surely, we rationalists are the people of all others who need the Bible most as a help to our faith and

life; for it strengthens us most when men's argument and intelligence are weakest. It touches the imagination, deepens feeling, makes men reverent and earnest. The Bible shows us "the mystery of godliness." It is good for us that its scenes are so foreign, so ancient, so beautiful, and its language so sublime, and often so difficult. This I am sure of: that, if you go to your Bible with nothing but your criticism, your worldly wisdom, your theories, you will not hear what its message tells. Into that kingdom you must enter as a little child. Carry a listening heart, and listen most to what you love or feel most deeply. Apply, if you will, your philosophy and history to the Bible, but apply it to yourself, your conduct, to your affections, to your longings after God. Its spiritual riches must be spiritually discerned.

So, then, if the Bible is to touch your life, you must separate your criticism of it from your daily use of its holier portions for devotional and moral help. Remember that religion is not only a belief. It is a habit of the soul. Remember that a good and noble life is formed very little on theories of life, almost wholly by communion with great examples, by love of radiant souls, by having your daily thoughts possessed with what is lovely and of good report. You have some native spring within of love to God and your neighbor, but this native spring is variable and limited. You need to kneel with Christ in his prayers, to go with him upon his errand through the cities of Judah, bringing faith and blessing as he goes. You have some natural indignation against wrong, some loyalty to what is just and noble; but the temptations

of the flesh and of the world will beset you every day. You need to burn with prophet and apostle, as they hold up wickedness to scorn. You need to fight their warfare over by hearing its story.

Can it be that you are so confident of your virtue and spiritual elevation that you feel no need of such help to better living? Then go to your Bible, that you may be humbled and stirred by the sight of goodness in a grander style, and know that breathing through the thoughts of all God's most faithful sons is a sense of aspiration, a prayer of confession, and a hope of forgiveness.

Or does life's moral demand already burden you so much that you dare not confront any sublimer standard, and, struggling along the lower levels of your poor partial attainments, need not look upward to any mountain of difficulty and more exacting ideal?

Then go to the Bible, that you may learn how lovingly the Father deals with all who struggle and are weary, and what are the great redeeming forces that have lifted many weaker men out of the same troubles, the same sins, that mar and check your better life. See Moses, the wrathful, the shedder of blood, made in God's hands an instrument of strong deliverance for a people of slaves. Hear David's penitence, and see his sins made white by sorrow and faithful service. Read the Lamentations of exiles, martyrs, and patriots, and how God's hand sustained them in the hour of loss and under the dark cloud. Then learn how Christ was "touched with a feeling of our infirmities," and how by the spirit of Christ a great company is gathered, who by love and faith and pa-

tient hope are saved out of an evil world, saved from themselves, and led to victory and peace.

I care not on what spiritual plane you stand. You cannot get beyond the Bible. You cannot fall so low as to fall outside its divine spirit of pity and redemption. It is a book for saints and for sinners, for all. It has a story for the child, a song for the poet, wisdom for the sage, and practical guidance for the busy world of men and women, such as most of you live in. If you neglect it, you are casting a birthright away. It is a heritage for which your fathers struggled like heroes, and which, if you lose, your children must win anew by long and weary warfare against superstition and unbelief; for the Bible is the world's book,—a book for all time and every nation,—and not to know it is to be, in the strictest sense, a barbarian (outside the circle of man's noblest life).

Consider now the second source of authority, which Orthodoxy places alongside of and above the natural light of reason. I mean the Church. The doctrine in its extreme form is that whatever the Church teaches or ever has taught must be true, however false and irrational it appears.

With all its faults and errors, it must be admitted that the Church has done, and is doing still; a most necessary work for mankind. It provides discipline for the will, and secures for men reverent habits and the great power and enthusiasm which come of men getting together in multitudes for the accomplishment of high and noble aims. In a word, the Church gives to religion and to conduct two immense powers,—the power of drill and the power of organization.

Even the intellectual life of man is crude and ineffective, unless each man, as it were, be supervised, trained, and quickened by some touch with the great impersonal body of human knowledge. That is what schools mean, and the university. They mean that the minds of your boys and girls need drill. The youthful intelligence, with tireless ingenuity, is exercised, watched, corrected, and made to acquire habits of attention and method. A country without schools is always ignorant; and an individual who has never had schooling, however great the native power, is always intellectually awkward. Then, after much training and discipline of intellectual habits, we send the youth to the university. The intention is that he shall come in touch with the main stream of the world's intellectual life, and, even at the expense of losing individuality, be saved for the rest of his career from fads, delusions, and barbaric or outgrown ideas. Universities do not succeed with all men; and men of good minds, by travel, by reading, by broad intellectual interests, find their university in the world. But, however it be won, we recognize that there is such a thing as what Matthew Arnold used to call "culture"; *i.e.*, being in touch with the world's best thought of all times and abreast of all the newest knowledge.

If, now, this patient drill and this large fellowship with superior minds be necessary even to develop the intellectual powers, how much more necessary is it in matters of faith and morals! What an academy can do for literature, what a university or scientific institute does for science, that the Church undertakes to do for faith and for conduct.



Why, then, do we liberal Christians not accept the Church? and what have we in her place?

First, because the world has been for some centuries growing to see that freedom is no less important than organization. If there were nothing in the world but drill and organization, we should be like the Chinese. The greatest steps forward which ever have been made by the human race were taken by men who stood outside what was accepted and traditional. We need not only the quiet, conservative forces of civilization, but we need the pioneer, the reformer, and the discoverer. In science the necessity of freedom has been abundantly demonstrated. Had men gone on thinking like their fathers and like all the world, we should never have had Galileo nor Columbus, nor Harvey, Newton, Darwin, or Pasteur. If the academies and the universities should absorb all the intellectual life of men, we should never have had the progress in art, the strong and varied literature which is the glory of European life.

We liberal Christians stand for this principle of freedom and progress in religion. This principle is the Protestant principle of private judgment, what the noble Puritans called "the liberty of prophesying."

This principle we chiefly stand for. This freedom we maintain. And more and more the whole religious world is coming to recognize its sacredness.

Important as this service is which liberals render to the rest of the world, yet, if we consider our personal needs, it is evident that we may be in danger from losing out of our own lives just that drill, that organization, that strength of habit and strength of

fellowship, which the old Church gives to all the world except ourselves.

If we were all prophets, poets, religious geniuses, the loss would not matter. If we were individually like Luther or Channing or Emerson, we might dispense with such spiritual bread as is distributed from the tables of the church; but, on the contrary, we are all learners, not originators. Our spiritual life, our faith, our moral tone, are vastly influenced by our habits and by our surroundings.

Therefore, just as our rationalism makes it the more necessary that we should read and love to read our Bibles, so our liberalism makes it the more essential that we should be faithful to all the forms and institutions of religion which do not interfere with a reasonable liberty.

But a grave decline seems to be going on in the matter of religious habits. In our plea for freedom, we are losing the immense benefits of drill. The good old custom of family devotion is vanishing from the home. Church-going is suspended for the lightest cause. Even the beautiful and affecting symbols of baptism and of the Lord's Supper are in many liberal congregations wholly disused.

The Puritan, with his intense religious life, and every man a priest in his own house, might well make public worship bare and plain; but, surely, in this age of splendor and art, we cannot dispense with any means by which the external forms of worship shall subdue us to reverence, and reach each heart through eye and ear.

Of all other men, we need the apostle's injunctions,

both that we should stand fast in our liberty and also that we should not "use liberty as occasion to the flesh"; *i.e.*, for doing as we like.

Especially do we need to realize the great truth there is in religion and in life, a sphere which passes understanding.

"The world by wisdom knew not God." Faith has not been born out of men's philosophies, but rather out of the great emotional and heart-reaching experiences of which human life is made, out of love and sorrow and the sense of sin, out of struggle, out of the love of justice and the hunger for a better world, out of great storms, when all the waves and the billows have passed over the soul. Through these has the wonderful faith risen up in men's hearts that God is our eternal Father. Not of literature, not of schools and scribes, has religion been given to men, though by these it has been systematized and taught. For the supreme inspirations of faith we do not look to the groves of Athens, or to Eastern sages, or to Western laboratories. We look to Gethsemane, to Calvary, to Galilee. As with faith, so with righteousness. All the commandments, all ethical systems, are only the description in words of the way good men and women do really strive to live. Only because these — honesty, purity, peace, and kindness — were already in the world, were laws and maxims made to encourage them. Jesus says, "Your righteousness must be better than that of the scribes, or you cannot go into the kingdom of heaven." The scribes and Pharisees tried to reduce life to a rule, to a system; but Jesus says that cannot be, for a good

life comes of the fulness of love and light within the soul.

In other words, there is in Christian goodness a warmth, a largeness, a delicacy of feeling, which quite overpass all verbal and logical statement. The new commandment of love which Christ gives is not a commandment at all, but a demand for an inward renewal of our very very life both toward our heavenly Father and our brother.

Therefore, in your plea for a reasonable and free religion do not forget that in this sphere the intellect may criticise, but not create.

In all that is most sacred, most inspiring, most beautiful in human experience, there is always more than you can understand.

You cannot argue a man into love. You cannot lecture him into a joyful sense of the poetry and beauty of the world. Neither can you impart faith by articles and conclusions.

As thought is deeper than all speech, so are your life with God and your fellowship with your brother far deeper and larger than any creed can be.

“The world by wisdom knew not God.” Let this assurance give you calmness and patience in a time of debating and creed-making and criticism such as we live in.

Hear the argument. Respect the eager search for truth. Be faithful to your liberty and light.

But know that this apparatus of the scribes is only the beginning, only the preparation, for your worship of the Father in spirit and in truth.

Of the making of books there is no end.

If God were known and his love revealed and his mercy trusted only by those who scale the steep places of human philosophy, then, indeed, there were no gospel at all for the great half-blinded world of toil-worn, suffering men.

But God is made known to us as a Father through those experiences which are common to all and within the reach of all God's children.

To the pure he showeth himself pure. To the merciful he showeth himself merciful.

We know him best as we find him through the life-experience of our common humanity, through simple, natural gladness, the gladness of daily need and unpurchasable sunshine, through sorrow, effort, faithful service, unquenchable affections, bearing a brother's burden, being brave, hopeful, and patient.

These are the elements in our nature to which Christ speaks, to that spiritual life of faith and love which is with "all sorts and conditions of men."

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they who come to God, not in the pride of their attainments, their refinements, their strong and subtle minds, but who offer unto him just the simple, brave true, and loving heart.

"The world by wisdom knew not God."

But, because Christ made known the preciousness, the beauty, the power, which is in man as man, because he drew his parables of divine things from man's lowliest estate, because he has wakened the world of rich and poor, of Cæsars and slaves, to a sense of a common humanity, therefore he has revealed our one Father in heaven.

The spirit of Christ in every age is the same. You and I enter into it, not by any knowledge or wisdom which separates us from other men, but only by our share in the grand democracy of the spirit, by our touch with the common heart of man.

That in human nature which is divine and heavenly is that in which the world's distinctions do not enter. It is the life of courage, love, and faith within the soul, which is for all God's children, his "little ones," wherever they may be.









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IMMORTALITY

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP

Minister of the Unitarian Congregational Church, Syracuse, N.Y.

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## IMMORTALITY.

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“Life and immortality.”—2 TIM. i. 10.

I. THE sacking of the city of Antwerp was perhaps the most frightful of all the frightful scenes in Philip II.'s war against the Netherlands. The Spaniards had entered the city to plunder, burn, and kill. By nightfall a thousand houses were on fire; and, under the glare of their burning homes, one by one the brave citizen-defenders fell. Infuriated by this stubborn resistance, the Spaniards at last began to kill every man, woman, and child they met, till the piles of dead barricaded the streets. In their blind fury, they seemed to cast off all semblance of human beings. Deeds too horrible to name were done. Hell seemed emptied of its fiends. But all the time, above the cursing, the fighting, the dying, the horror of it all, up in the belfry tower of the great cathedral, there sounded out every half-quarter of an hour the melodious voices of the chiming bells, singing, “Peace and good will”—peace and good will to all mankind.

A striking picture this of the contrast which has been felt in all ages between the calmness of the heavens and their voiceless song above and the turmoil and trouble of the poor dark earth below. Yonder moon, what sights and sounds of woe she has shone on nightly for thousands of years! and yet she

shines on as calm and peaceful as ever, no hint of trouble in her pure, pale orb.

Nevertheless, our earth shines a star among the stars. A few miles above her surface all her noises are hushed. The battle's roar or the volcano's rage is heard no more than the falling leaf or the insect's hum. The surrounding heaven hushes earth's cries, as the mother hushes the wailing infant in her bosom. The dwellers on other planets see our world as a sweet morning or evening star, no hint of trouble in her pure white rays. To Venus, indeed, our earth is the fairest star in all the heavens.

But this community of nature goes deeper still. The calm moon's surface is rent with innumerable volcanic throes. Turmoil there as well as here! But when we begin carefully to consider the necessary conditions of planetary life anywhere in the galaxy, we soon begin to realize that the community of nature between all planets goes down to the very roots of things.

All organisms use up tissue by the very act of living, and only a finite quantity of food for the supply of tissue exists at any moment on any given planet. Therefore, if life kept on multiplying indefinitely on any given planet, the supply would swiftly come to an end; and either all organisms would die or only the stronger would survive. Were it otherwise, the planet would soon be literally covered with living animals, unable to move, like sheep in a pen. Death, then, is no afterthought of the Almighty, no special liability of one particular planet, but part and parcel of the eternal will in all planetary worlds.

Moreover, in order to use a planet, the body of the inhabitant must be made of the same stuff as the body of the planet. As, then, all material worlds are kept together by the force of gravitation, the dwellers on them must be confined to their surfaces by the planetary stuff their bodies contain. Every material planet in all space, glittering and glorious though it be, is none the less, in a certain sense, a prison-house to the souls thereon. Such souls are all, by the primary conditions of their material existence, shut out by viewless walls of adamant from the rest of the universe. Full of awe, of beauty, of mystery though those worlds may be, though they may be inconceivably vaster and more stately than our own, though their mountains may surpass ours, as the Himalayas overtop the molehills at their feet, though compared with their immeasurable oceans Atlantic and Pacific may be as some shallow inlet, half-forgotten by the tide, nevertheless all of them are rudimental worlds, separated, secluded from all other worlds; and their inhabitants are, without exception, incapable of quitting permanently their solitary dwelling-place.

An eternity of existence on the most glorious orb in all God's creation would eventually become a curse; for the sons of God thereon would at last become weary of the splendid monotony, would long to quit their gilded prison, and hunger and thirst to make that grand death-leap into space by which alone they can gain an entrance into the boundless universe of God.

The dwellers on other planetary worlds, we may be sure, are subject to death, as we are; and, if this be

indeed certain, then the conclusion is at once forced upon us that their destiny is precisely like our own. If death annihilates us, it also annihilates them; and, if so, God has held out false hopes to every one of his planetary children, for to all of them he has given the sight of a universe in which they have neither part nor lot. In such a case, a just God would have hidden the boundless heaven. In that, all the stars are afloat, small golden islets on a boundless sea. Now, this illimitable space is either inhabited or not inhabited. If it is not inhabited, then the universe contains nothing but ephemeral existences, insects of a day, with no grandeur of destiny, no infinite horizon to lure them on to ceaseless progress. If it is not, then all the sentient existences in the whole universe are confined in little round prisons, subjects of an endless change that goes nowhere. If it is not, then the whole drama of existence is a series of futile beginnings, that end just as they are fairly begun. Surely, surely, such a lame and impotent conclusion is

“hardly worth

This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth”!

To try to realize such a scheme would put confusion into any brain; and, the better the brain, the greater would be the confusion. But brain and universe are effect and cause. Eternally, the universe tends to produce brains which more and more nearly reproduce an image of itself. If, then, the tendency is ever to produce more and more confusion in the brain, then is the universe itself confusion; but all we know

of the universe is not confusion, but stately order and steadfast law, and the confusion is inside undeveloped or half-developed brains alone.

The first great argument for man's immortality, then, is the sight of the starry heavens. They not only "declare the glory of God": they silently proclaim the immortality of man.

II. The second great argument is the consensus of the human race, the universality of the belief in a life after death in all tribes and nations.

Some years ago the *Nineteenth Century Magazine* gave a symposium on immortality, in which Mr. Huxley practically said he did not know, though he or any other man would give a great deal to know; while Mr. Harrison said that he could not believe it, because he considered that life was impossible without molecular motion, in which, I daresay, he is right, though why that should lead to unbelief in immortality I cannot see, as the whole universe has very probably molecular movements in all its spaces. At a time when it is scientifically provable that seemingly empty space is put by a powerful magnet into a state of stress represented by hundreds of pounds to the square inch, we need no longer fear that there is not force enough in space to keep man's life going.

Mr. Harrison's state of mind is interesting, as it shows how a noble and naturally religious mind can take refuge in man's future on the earth, and throw its enthusiasm into that, when the grand hope has failed it altogether. The looking forward to a better day for man on earth, the yearning for a nobler mode of living the common life together, to be begun now



and to be carried forward by generation after generation, until something inconceivably grand comes of it,—this must be a noble part of any man's religion; but no one conceives that this earth can sustain human life on it forever. There must come a time when human civilization will absolutely cease to be; and, the grander its achievement, the more melancholy and, indeed, senseless will be the conclusion if nothing comes of it, after all. The universe will be no richer,—nay, inconceivably poorer,—when it is all through with, and not a single vestige of any sort remains, not even a dim sense of a great loss of something noble and beautiful, brought to pass by the labors, sorrows, joys, and triumphs of a thousand thousand generations, ended, gone forever, the dull universe being too stupid even to miss it.

Mr. Greg, in a weakly benevolent way, stood for the defence (?) of immortality. He confessed that the arguments were not nearly as strong as people supposed them to be. The supposed universality of the belief among men was very much exaggerated. It was doubtful whether the Chinese could be called believers at all, while every one knew that the Buddhists believed in Nirvana, or the complete extinction of the conscious individual soul. So here were three-fourths of mankind swept out of the consensus at once. It is difficult to conceive how a candid and scholarly gentleman could possibly write in such blandly complete ignorance of the facts. The Chinese are a nation of spiritualists. Their sacred books are full of the connection between earth and heaven. To this day the central act of the coronation of a new

emperor is the solemn moment when he stands alone in a given spot, and there receives his spirit crown from his spirit ancestor in heaven. The dead father- and mother-spirits are the guardian deities in the house of every Chinaman. Probably in no nation under heaven is the belief in the life after death so practically universal.

It is time, I think, that people in general should understand at least something about the Buddhistic Nirvana. The Buddhistic conception of the other life is the most realistic of all. Dante's "Divine Comedy" is not more so. Each separate heaven and each separate hell is graphically depicted, and to one or other of these hells or heavens your deeds will surely take you. Do evil, and the kind of evil takes you to its appropriate kind of hell. Do good, and your peculiar goodness fits you for a peculiar heaven. There are some six-and-thirty of them. Be fairly good, and you will go into one of the six heavens of the Nats, there to enjoy for innumerable ages the bliss of that heaven. Be noble and true, and you will go into one of the heavens of the "Rupa," or the "embodied," there to taste the highest delights possible to those who have still any part or lot with matter. Be a saint, a tender lover and helper of all your kind, an uplifter of the down-trodden, an opener of prison doors, and you will enter one of the heavens of Arupa, or the "bodiless," there to taste the bliss, past man's understanding, of the pure unembodied soul. Be absolutely perfect, a saint of saints, an archangel among the angels, and you will enter Nirvana. Now, in the first place, barely one in a whole generation of men is

thought worthy of the supreme reward of Nirvana. Grant that two are in a hundred millions. Then the Buddhist belief confessedly is that at least all but two of that vast aggregate live on after death, through the illimitable time-spaces the Buddhistic imagination loves to contemplate. But I imagine that even such learned Western interpreters as Rhys Davids are at fault about those two. Think of it. Do evil, and you go to hell. Do good, and you go to heaven. Do nobly, and you go to a high heaven. Be a saint, sage, and lover of your kind, and you go to the heaven of heavens. But be absolutely true, perfect, a sage of sages, a saint of saints, guide, redeemer, and benefactor, and you are annihilated. There is absolutely nothing left of you. Does this sound rational, conceivable? Has not the prosaic Western mind, as again and again before, with all its learning and painstaking, failed to interpret the mystic, unfathomable mind of the East? Nirvana is oneness with Absolute Being. So completely one with the Mighty Whole is the perfect spirit that you can no longer think of such spirit as anything separate from the Whole, as anything less than "part of the Day" to a million, million generations! Buddha himself "entered Nirvana" on the day when, sitting under the Bo-tree, he was filled with infinite compassion for all creatures; for then and there he and the vast All were one. But this supreme experience was but the beginning of a long earthly ministry, spent in proclaiming "the deliverance."

"It existed," says Mr. Greg, "among pagan nations in a form so vague and hazy as to be describable as

a dream rather than a religious faith." It was a dream, was it, that gave Fabius Buteo the courage to start out from the beleaguered Capitol, and walk all alone and unarmed right through the ranks of the savage Gauls, bearing with him the sacred offerings to the spirits of his ancestors! It was also a dream that made that wild army of besiegers part hither and thither in silence, and let him pass; for the awe of the spirit world was upon them also!

But enough of good, ineffectual Mr. Greg.

"Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis  
Tempus eget!"

The truth is that here we find perhaps the most amazing consensus of belief discoverable in all history. No wildest savage tribe, no barbarous, no semi-civilized people, no civilized nation, has ever existed which did not believe in the life after death. The only adequate explanation is that the environment of mankind presses on man for recognition, and that this pressure has been felt by every race. The consensus of mankind is the second great argument for immortality.

III. The third great argument for immortality is the consensus of the faculties, powers, insights, in man. Here the consensus is as yet very incomplete; and much work has to be done before anything like completeness can be gained. Let us first attempt to clear the ground a little.

The belief in man's immortality is never doubted, except just at the time when the logical understanding is beginning to awake, and is beginning to ask

questions and to demand answers which are not immediately forthcoming. Till now there has been no systematic attempt either to ask or answer these questions wisely. There was not knowledge enough to do either. Even if the Church had not stifled free thought, the inevitable guess-work would have had small scientific value. But the human mind is beginning to understand something of the conditions of the problem, and is beginning to be able to propound the appropriate questions.

When questions are asked, doubt begins; and an age of doubt generates a sceptical turn of mind. Over-scepticism is the disease, like measles in childhood, which seems almost inevitable when man begins to think. It passes away when man has continued to think steadfastly and long. They only are contemptible who insist on giving their measles to other people.

The arguments of such persons are generally cheap enough, and should not detain us long. A few think it the cleverest thing possible to voice their scepticism after some such fashion as this: "Oh, yes, you want virtue rewarded. It goes in rags to-day. It shall have its coach and six to-morrow. I sin, that I may get pleasure. You are virtuous, that you may be rewarded in heaven. I am selfish for to-day, you for to-morrow. That is all the difference between my vice and your virtue."

What all true souls desire is a cause worth fighting for, an Infinite to adore, a future for man with a far-stretching horizon of possibility. You, friend sceptic, do not offer a universe one can even respect. To

such a universe of death as you offer the brave soul can only say:—

Oh, dull and cold and mindless Universe,  
 In some strange way thou canst not comprehend,  
 Life, Love, and Truth have sprung from out thy breast.  
 Thou art not worthy of them. No intent  
 Of thine gave birth to them. They gladly die,  
 Trusting to see thy stupid stars no more,  
 Mere mindless lights amidst thy curse of black.  
 Their dream of truth was vaster than thy All.  
 They turn one glance of scorn on thee, and pass.

Even Tyndall comes too near to this mistake in his criticism of Martineau. Martineau has given a glowing picture of the sustaining force of man's mighty hopes; and Tyndall rejoins in effect: "It is the old tale. See the comfort of belief." Martineau had no thought just then of the "comfort of belief." He was voicing the joy of publishing good tidings. And, surely, if a man has no good tidings to tell, it were best to keep silent. Men have enough to bear without having a single unnecessary load heaped upon them. I invite all who would think seriously of this great matter to note that every discovery of science has been a vast enlargement and expansion of man's horizon. Immense vistas of time, incredible enlargement of space, inconceivable depths of minuteness in all things seen and unseen. But, if the hypothesis that death ends all were to be slowly verified, then the universal process would be precisely reversed. Man would first begin to doubt whether his hopes for man were not too immense. Then he would begin to think they were, and forthwith those hopes would

begin to dwindle. Then, as the evidence began to accumulate, his hopes would wither one by one, till man would at last be confronted by the miserable certainty that he was indeed a creature of a day, "crushed before the moth." The gigantic coffin-lid of a dull and mindless universe would be plainly seen to be descending, a vast extinguisher, upon the whole race together. Here, then, the progress of knowledge, instead of widening man's horizon, would narrow it to a point, instead of filling him with wonder would fill him with disgust. What a strange progress backward this would be! Of one thing we may be sure, that the foremost nations will cling longest to the great hope; for that hope is inseparable from the victorious tone. If once that hope vanishes from mankind, the defeated tone will take possession of all men; and man's noblest victories will come to an end.

But now let us consider how far a consensus of the faculties has yet gone. Many of the faculties in man have already given in their verdict, and it is in vain to try to alter that verdict.

The sense of justice in man has already given in its verdict. It knows nothing of failing tissues, of weakened heart-force, and all the details of life's slow ebbing. It simply is master in its own department. It only says that, if life ceases at death, then justice cannot be done. That is all. Here is Winthrop, full of charming genius, of high honor, of noble dreams of a better America. He feels it his duty to throw up a splendid career in a moment, and enlist as a private soldier in the war for freedom. He is shot

at Big Bethel, simply because "some one had blundered." A coward ran away that night, and lived. Winthrop stood his ground, and died. If the moment his heart ceased to beat, there was absolutely nothing left of Winthrop, then justice to all eternity cannot be done to Winthrop. It is an utter missing of the point to say that, if Winthrop wanted his virtue rewarded, then it was not worth rewarding. He probably thought nothing about it. The main question is not about Winthrop's motives, but about the foundation of the universe. If it is a matter of perfect indifference to the universe whether justice is or is not done to Winthrop, then the universe is unjust. If the Builder of such universe cares nothing whether Winthrop lives or dies, then man cares nothing about either Builder or universe.

This is the argument of Jesus to the Sadducees, and on its own ground it is unanswerable. The Sadducees devoutly believed in the divine origin of the five books of Moses. Well, in them Jehovah says to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." "God," says Jesus, "is not the God of the dead, but of the living." In other words, if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are now mere dust, then it is a bitter farce to say that God is "their God." If there were no God at all, they would only be dust just the same. It is the argument of Paul to the Corinthians. "If the dead are not raised, then Christ is not raised; and, if Christ has not been raised, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." That is, Christ rises because man rises; and he is the first-fruits of them that sleep, the forerunner, type, and



proof of man's resurrection. If Christ is not risen, then we have no good tidings to tell, and you none to believe; for, if God be such a God as to care nothing whether Jesus is alive or dead,—nay, such a God as to leave that great heart to be dust forever,—then we do not care for such a God. In no sense can such a God be adorable to man. Let him exist away, alone in his own supremely selfish eternity. The noble soul will gladly die to get rid at once and forever of the sight of a universe too mean to live in.

Now, the logical understanding has no sentiment, but it has to account for the existence of sentiment. Here is the sense of justice, so strong in great natures that in them it becomes a master force. But how could it even exist in an unjust universe? How were the apples got in?

The affections have already decided this question. They do not analyze tissues. They simply feel. Here is a mother who has lost her child, her heart's treasure. If that child's spirit has not found its tender home in God, if it is absolutely annihilated, then the mother-heart is outraged, desolate, and bereft. That is all. Out of the universe came her motherhood, with all its wonderful strength and passion. The universe which generated it now stamps upon it, and kills it. But how in that case was that mother-love produced? How can love come out of an unloving and unlovely universe? If love had once begun to grow by accident, the unloving universe around would soon begin to stifle it. If light eternally injured and distorted eyes, there would soon be no eyes for light to injure. But loving hearts

continue to be produced. O poor logician! where can they come from except from a loving universe?

The genius of music has already decided the question. The sweet and tender requiem, the solemn burst of praise, the sacred hush of prayer, are among the grandest, most precious of her treasures; and she will never give them up. Convince mankind that the dead rise not, and sacred music would cease at once, the Gloria would die out, and the Benedictus would sob itself into silence. There would be nothing left in the universe worthy of music's higher strain, except the longings of man's heart after the Divine. But that heart would soon break when it was at last clearly known that there was no Divine to long for.

The logical understanding is not musical, but it has to account for the existence of sacred music. How could it come into existence in a universe that was not sacred?

Poetry has given in its verdict. If the dead rise not, then shut up your Dante, your Milton, your Wordsworth, your Goethe, your Browning, your Tennyson. Science has destroyed the heavenly muse. The logical understanding, sitting as a dog in every manger, refuses sustenance to the winged horse of heaven any more. Let us come down to prose.

The higher fiction is giving in its verdict by degrees. It is not all in, but enough is already in hand to give a clear general idea of the final result. No absolutely first-class novel can be written without a high belief. It is the lack of this in so many English novelists that makes their work second-rate. Take the belief out of Dickens's "Christmas Carol,"

and how much Christmas Carol would be left? Take away the belief from the death of little Paul, and the beautiful scene would end in bathos. Take away the belief from Colonel Newcome's "Adsum," when he hears the call to come up higher, and all the solemn beauty is gone. The last possibility left for the noble-minded novelist who has lost his belief in immortality will be to get a passionate love for the better day for man on the earth. That will still last long, thank God.

The logical understanding is the one voice wanting in this vast harmony of faith. Put simply, the attitude of the logical understanding is this: "Here is a dead body. A moment ago that body was alive. Something very remarkable has happened. What seemed a very distinct force has vanished, and I cannot tell what has become of it."

Now, it is the right — nay, the duty — of the logical understanding to take this stand. It is its special business to study out the sequences of things, to attach them to each other, link by link, by a chain of causes and consequences. It ceases to be itself if it weakly pretends to see just because everybody wants it to see. It has here a long and difficult task. It must be left perfectly free slowly to carry out its investigations and to wait patiently for results. The only thing it has no right to do is to attempt to gag all the other faculties in man, and insist that these have no rights which the logical understanding is bound to respect.

But the logical understanding must be left free to follow its own peculiar methods of work, without the

slightest interference from the other faculties. If the Eternal is indeed altogether adorable, and if from him the immortal soul of man proceeds, the logical understanding will itself discover this in its own way at last. The facts exist, and let us be sure that there is a way to verify the facts.

Mankind in general do not realize what immense steps toward the comprehension of this supreme subject have been already taken. In the old days men thought it the easiest thing in the world to destroy matter. A candle was burned up. That was the end of it. They never asked where the candle was gone to. The total disappearance was too familiar a fact. It was a startling as well as an epoch-making discovery that Lavoisier made in 1793, when he found that a small amount of water could be separated into the two gases, oxygen and hydrogen, and could again be converted to water by the union of the self-same gases which had just been formed, without the loss of a fraction of a grain in weight. This led to the tremendous deduction. Matter cannot be destroyed. It may change its form in a thousand ways, but no particle of it can be destroyed. But a yet further advance was made. It was discovered that no element could be changed to any other element. Hydrogen holds its own unchanged in millions of millions of years. It is older than worlds or galaxies, and will outlast either. It is true that there is plenty of loose thinking still abroad. Some people still talk of the atom as merely an ideal conception. As if a thing that persisted on being counted, up from one, two, three, four, to millions of millions, one at a time,

could be anything else than a thing! In the future, therefore, we may surely rely that this vast discovery will hold its own. Some supposed elements may be shown to be compound; but the single atom will still hold its own, each atom one and the same forever and ever.

The first great and marvellous step in the chain of proof has been made. We can now see how a given thing, of a fixed and definite nature, with a host of peculiar qualities all its own, can, nevertheless, continue to exist through all eternity, keeping every one of those peculiar qualities all intact. We see, indeed, that it must be so constituted that it cannot possibly lose one. If it could lose one, it could lose all. The theory of the vortex atom, which is now the sole surviving theory, and which is destined to become the possession of mankind, shows how simple, yet how marvellous, is the law by which this is made possible, when once the mighty postulate is granted that One infinitely perfect substance fills all space. Matter is eternal, simply because God is eternal; and everything that comes forth from him must of necessity partake of his eternity.

The great discovery of the nineteenth century is that Force cannot be destroyed. Now there is no kind of force which is not resident in something. There is no such thing as force in the abstract.

Between the dead clay which once held Napoleon, lying there so cold, so statue-like, so perfectly passive, and the living Napoleon, whose life-force once made Europe tremble, there is no difference whatever in weight. No particle of matter has yet left the frame.

But a tremendous force has gone, nevertheless. Now, it is just as unscientific to assert that a single unit of that force can be lost as it is to say that a single atom of the oxygen, nitrogen, or carbon in that body can be lost. A complete account of what has happened must take in the whole of that force, and must show where it now is and how it is still acting.

There is no single instance known to man of a substance being vaguely dissipated into space and losing its identity in the process. Such a thing is absolutely unthinkable to the trained mind. The only hypothesis left would be that life and mind are forces which belong to a peculiar combination of certain elements,—oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, etc.,—and that death releases this force, which is gradually dissipated in vibrations, which pass forth from the body to surrounding nature.

Now, there is not a particle of evidence to show that these separate elements have the slightest self-directing motion, and it is very difficult to conceive how any combination of them could generate what they have not got themselves. The theory of spontaneous generation, which aimed at proving that there was some slight power of this sort in certain combinations of these elements, is utterly dead. The careless experiments which seemed to favor it were annihilated by the careful experiments which disproved it. Indeed, the very existence of Canning Companies and the durability of their wares is experiment enough.

All we know, then, favors the hypothesis that life and mind are units as permanent as the atoms are, and for the self-same reason. Grant the same vast

hypothesis that the vortex-theory of atoms demands, — namely, one perfect substance completely filling all space,—and, as the atoms are permanent, owing to their having one peculiar kind of motion, so life is permanent, because it has another kind of motion peculiar to itself. I know how vast this hypothesis is, but only a vast hypothesis can fit the facts of matter, and only a vast hypothesis can fit the facts of mind. The moth flitting round the candle has its little impetuous life apparently burned out of it in a moment; and it is just as easy for ordinary men to-day to suppose that it has vanished altogether as it was for ordinary men yesterday to suppose that the substance of the burned out candle had vanished altogether. But to believe either is equally difficult for the mature mind. Personally, I believe with Tennyson,—

“That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroyed,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete.”

I know the vast gulf between the human consciousness and the little insect life; but I believe in the gradual ascent of the lower life toward the higher, and I aspire to love all creation with, the same love wherewith the Creator that cares for the sparrow loves it.

IV. The last argument I shall touch upon to-day is the argument from testimony, a department in which the logical understanding will, if I mistake not, have before long a great deal of work to do. It has already.

The argument from testimony is not all in by any means. It is only just beginning to be properly treated, and even now very few persons are competent so to treat it. Crass credulity and crass incredulity are equally ruled out. Perhaps the latter, if it christens itself scientific, and commences to browbeat the rest of the world, is the more offensive and unendurable of the two. The true investigator must understand that he is dealing with the tenderest, most subtle, and most secret fibres of human nature. He must hold his own will in perfect abeyance. He must be simply an embodied eye. He must record dispassionately and without any bias whatever all he sees. He must enter upon each investigation with no preconception whatever. If he is sure beforehand that he is going to meet fraud in testimony, either ancient or modern, he is mentally as incapable of giving a true judgment on the facts as if he were prepared to swallow wholesale every wonderful detail he hears or reads. I give it as my deliberate judgment that there is already a mass of testimony in the world both of books and men, quite sufficient to convince any fair-minded jury of experts, provided it were only sifted and wisely put together. The spiritual environment of man is still pressing on man's brain for recognition. It has done so in all the past.

To-day the whole Christian world gives the grandest instance of what testimony can do in aiding, deepening, and vivifying man's instinctive belief in immortality, for to-day is the anniversary of the resurrection of Jesus. To-day is Easter day. The Church this day celebrates her risen Master. The songs of



triumph swell high, and the burst of praise rises from a thousand temples. Jesus is risen. The apostles, Paul included, were witnesses to the resurrection. One of these, Paul himself, gives a record of his experiences. He is the one direct, undoubted witness that we can call. What does he tell us? Does he say that he saw the physical body of Jesus, which had died and was buried, rise again and ascend into heaven? Such a thought is entirely apart from his testimony. Up to his time it had probably never been heard of. What he says is this. "He rose and was seen by Peter, then by the twelve, and then by five hundred brethren at once; and lastly he was seen by me also." What, then, is the resurrection to which Paul was a witness? He declares that he saw the living Jesus, who was not dead down in the dark, but was alive to God, and had passed into the heavens. To this resurrection he asserts that he himself was a witness, a witness as completely competent to testify as any of the other apostles, Peter included. It is perfectly clear that Paul is not thinking of any resurrection of flesh and bones, but of a rising of the spirit of Jesus into the light and life of God. If Paul had been assured that the other apostles had seen the physical body of Jesus again alive, that they had eaten and drank with him after he rose from the dead, and had finally seen his physical body ascend palpably into heaven, it would have been absurd for him to claim that he also was a witness to all this.

Now, three years after Paul's conversion, as he himself tells us (Gal. i. 18), he went to Jerusalem, and was with Peter for fifteen days. Most assuredly,

Peter told Paul what he had seen; and Paul saw that Peter's experience had been similar to his own.

The primitive gospel (Mark xvi. 1-9), is nearest in its simplicity to all this. When we come to Matthew, then we have an angel descending from heaven, his countenance like lightning, the keepers quaking, the seals broken, and the stone rolled away without mortal hands. How far legend carried this can be seen in the Gospel of Peter. Luke makes him eat a broiled fish before the disciples, while the supplement to the Fourth Gospel shows the risen Jesus making a fire on the borders of the Lake of Galilee, and preparing for his disciples a meal of fish and bread. So swiftly on these inevitable lines did the legend grow as it rolled.

But what was the nucleus of fact around which these details grew, these parasitic growths which for centuries have well-nigh hidden the truth to which they cling? The spiritual appearing of Jesus to his disciples after his death. Paul was right. The whole question of man's resurrection is solved, if it was the real, living Jesus that he saw. The belief that it was the real Jesus turned him from darkness to light, from a hinderer to a helper, from a persecutor to an apostle. The belief that it was the real Jesus who appeared to them turned the poor little distracted band of Galilean fishermen into heroes and guides. They and Paul together changed the aspect of the world. To us the priceless value of the teachings of Jesus—those teachings that solve the moral world, and give to man the law of his life—must ever be held supreme, superior to all things external to them.

But I think that we should have never heard of the Sermon on the Mount, had it not been for the passionate faith of the early apostles in the rising of their Master. This it was that gave them the courage, the victorious tone which carried them through so much, which made them treasure and preserve those matchless sayings themselves. For my part I do not think that their courage was born of illusion. I believe that Jesus after his death was able so to manifest himself to his poor bereft disciples as to fill them with a sense of the reality of his appearing, and to give them the strength to go on with the work he had begun. It was a tremendous responsibility to take. Such rending of the veil between the two worlds should never be made, save for gravest cause; but Christendom has justified the deed. Millions on millions of wounded hearts have been consoled and strengthened. Such strength of conviction in the reality of the life after death has been engendered that it will carry mankind over the dead-point of doubt which was sure to come when once the logical understanding began to awake.

Meanwhile, let the logical understanding work bravely on. In the end its truth will be seen to be in accord with all other truth. But for a season yet mankind must in this great matter still live by faith, — faith in God, faith in all the God-given faculties of man, faith in the divine revelations which come through these faculties. Thank God, to us our beloved dead are not asleep, but broad awake in the full day of heaven, their feet forever busied in running on blessed errands, their eyes not resting with closed and

weary lids, but beaming love on all that crave and need that love. When a grand pulse of recognition comes to our hearts in the hour of vision, let us lift up those hearts to that vast human heaven where the good and wise and true and tender dwell, —

“and trust  
With faith that comes of self-control  
The truths that never can be proved,  
Until we close with all we loved  
And all we flow from, soul in soul.”



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THE MYTH OF THE RESURREC-  
TION OF JESUS

BY

JOSEPH MAY

Pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia

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SERIES 11

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## THE MYTH OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

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"I call any story a myth which for good reasons is not to be taken historically, and yet is not a wilful fabrication with intent to deceive, but the natural growth of wonder and tradition, or a product of the Spirit uttering itself in a narrative form."—REV. FREDERIC H. HEDGE, D.D.

At this beautiful spring season the people of the Christian world very generally unite to celebrate the supposed resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Influenced by association and sympathy, and by the love of a festal occasion, many of our Unitarian churches, including our own, are wont to mark the period with tokens of gladness and services of rejoicing.

In most cases, I think, our people attempt to make some discriminations as to their motives in participating in the Easter occasion. They seek to give to it the significance of a celebration of the revived life of nature in the spring, or the deeper sentiment of a festival of human immortality.

It is, I fear, difficult to make such discriminations clear; and, in our own case, the profound belief of our beloved senior pastor in the historical reality of the resurrection of Jesus, a position which he has supported with consummate critical acumen, and which he presents with most winning persuasive skill in his



annual sermon, naturally, before the public, gives to that belief the support of our own seeming assent.

Dr. Furness's argument for the historical reality of the resurrection is unquestionably a masterpiece of literary analysis, as it has been pronounced by able lawyers a surpassing example of the skilful examination of evidence. Maintained as it is with so much power of argument and fervor of conviction, it can hardly have failed deeply to influence many minds. His reasoning in defence of the gospel-miracles generally, made a deep impression upon readers, and has enabled great numbers to sustain belief in them who otherwise must have rejected them much earlier than has been the case.

Yet, in fact, I have reason to think that, at present, belief in the resurrection does not widely prevail among you; and, as I myself unqualifiedly disbelieve in the event, I feel it to be a duty to myself (and perhaps it is such to you) to state, formally, the dissenting view in regard to this crowning miracle of the traditional history of Jesus which I have often uttered here incidentally, and elsewhere more expressly.

I do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead, except by that spiritual resurrection by which all the children of men, on the dissolution of the body, pass into a new life beyond the grave.

The story of his physical and earthly resurrection is, in my judgment, mythical, not historical.

In this opinion in regard to the narrative I suppose that I am accompanied by the large majority of the clergy of our Church and equally by the large majority of our laity. Our scholars are, I think, unani-

mous in the same view. To state the position of liberal scholars in a word, they find it easier to account for the existence of the resurrection-narrative as a myth than to justify so exceptional an occurrence as historical on the evidence on which it rests.

Prominent among such scholars and one of the latest to discuss the story in detail is the venerable Rev. James Martineau of England, the most spiritual of our preachers; now an octogenarian, and the peer of his wonderful fellow-countryman, Mr. Gladstone, in physical and mental vitality; perhaps the ablest of English metaphysicians, and who has brought his scholarship down to the latest date; who quite recently, in his "Seat of Authority in Religion," examines this question elaborately, and convincingly exhibits the mythical character of the resurrection-story.

A still more recent work by Professor J. Estlin Carpenter, of Oxford, occupies the same position, and clearly exhibits the mode of development of the whole mythical element in the New Testament.

Even among members of the orthodox Christian communion the beginnings of the same process of thought are plainly seen, which, *by explaining, explains away* the miraculous element in these ancient narratives.

As was said many years ago by an eminent scholar and preacher of our body, the miraculous element is no longer a prop and support of the Christian tradition. It is a weight which Christianity has to carry. Jesus is not believed because he worked the miracles. *The miracles are believed because men are reluctant to*

*detach from his revered personality any elements which have been felt to contribute to its dignity.*

Elsewhere, certainly, outside the Bible, the Protestant world of to-day unanimously rejects all miracles.\* The Catholic Church professes to believe them of many of her saints of present as well as of former generations. In this she is more consistent; for the one effective philosophical argument for the miracles of the New Testament — that on which Dr. Furness rests, and which he has made so forcible and suggestive — is that which makes them still a part of the order of nature; operations wrought by powerful human wills, in virtue of a high spirituality and of unfamiliar but genuine natural laws. This obviously justifies the expectation of such works by other men of exceptional spiritual and moral force as well as by Jesus and the Apostles.

In this expectation, however, we are disappointed. Protestantism, at least, does not find authentic modern instances of miracle. Even the miracles of the New Testament other than those of Jesus are seldom, I think, enlarged upon, if maintained, by our modern scholars; and I doubt if intelligent and educated Romanists believe very heartily in those of to-day which are reported among their communion.

The position upon which I rest in the discussion of the present question is this. The story of the resur-

\* But in 1748 the denial of the post-apostolic miracles by Middleton occasioned as profound a shock to religious sensibility as did the publication of Strauss's mythical theory of the gospel-miracles in 1835. In the third century a similar treatment, by Origen, of the Old Testament narrative equally offended the religious world. See Rev. Dr. Hedge's admirable discussion of the mythical element in the New Testament, in his "Ways of the Spirit," where the spiritual truth and value which may attach to myths is luminously shown.

rection of Jesus is only a part of the tissue of miracle which a credulous, unscientific age wove instinctively into the tradition of his life and death. It grew out of the same causes, its acceptance and propagation depended on the same conditions, as did the others. While the legend of the miraculous birth, with its attendant angelic phenomena, is more fanciful, it is of exactly the same *kind* of narratives; and, while the Christian consciousness, by a refined and elevated instinct, dismissed the trivial stories preserved to us in the apocryphal New Testament, these are, also, of the same *kind*, originating in the same way, and only differing in their want of dignity and suggestiveness.

I have heretofore, as exhaustively as I was able, discussed with you the origin of the belief in miracles and the particular subject of the miracles of the New Testament. I could not detain you now to traverse the same ground again. If you share, as I suppose you do, the present wide-spread incredulity on this subject, you are fully justified by the famous *dictum* of an acute philosopher of the past century, whose skeptical vein made him odious, but who in one brief logical statement exhausted the argument. Hume maintained that it is, in every case of alleged miracle, more likely that testimony should err than that a miracle should have occurred.\*

The Christian world has struggled with this pregnant aphorism for a hundred and fifty years, but it has not escaped from it. Instinctive recognition of the

\* Hume's exact language is "that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavors to establish. And even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force which remains after deducting the inferior."

truth which it pithily expresses has led to a steady decline of belief in the miraculous as science, intelligence, and culture have advanced.

The result is admirably exhibited by Lecky, in his "History of European Morals," where his examination of the subject of miracle is as luminous as it is convincing. In the face of whatever evidence there is, belief in miracle always declines with growing popular intelligence. Lecky's admirable discussion may also be summed up in a *dictum*. It is not, he shows, that the occurrence of miracles is discredited by argument. It is that, as intelligence advances, miracles cease to occur.\*

It has not been, indeed, by demonstration of their scientific improbability that the miracles of the New Testament have lost credit with so many persons. It must be admitted that, on sufficient evidence, we must believe *anything*, no matter how unusual, or how subversive of what we have hitherto determined. In these days of science we all understand and acknowledge this. We cannot pretend to limit by former experience the scope of the unknown forces of nature or of the mind.

But the ground has simply been taken from beneath the Scripture miracles of either Testament, and others, by our better understanding of the nature of the writings in which their occurrence is recorded, and of the workings of men's minds in unscientific periods and in circumstances like those of the early followers of Jesus.

That in the New Testament we have a body of

\* Lecky, History of European Morals, vol. i. pp. 368 and following.

thoroughly innocent writings; documents essentially genuine, and in spirit, purpose, intention, truthful, is a statement which no one would seriously qualify.

Here are invaluable relics of the literature which grew up, as any such literature grows up, in the first century or two of Christianity; but the popular idea of what these writings individually are, how they were composed, what is their authority as testimony, is probably very imperfect, if not incorrect. Putting aside all question of their miraculous inspiration, which I need not consider here, the documents of the New Testament present a problem in many respects very intricate to the student.

The Gospels, with which we are now chiefly concerned, appear to the superficial reader as the artless accounts, by well-informed persons, of the life and preaching of Jesus as they had severally known them. We are accustomed to read these narratives as if they came, in form and directly, from the hands of his companions or near contemporaries. Tradition sanctions this view. But, so stated, it requires careful qualifications. The first three Gospels, in their present form, date, probably, from periods ranging from forty to seventy years after Jesus's death. It is possible that portions of their contents were even written down earlier,—perhaps considerably earlier,—or that they were founded, partly, on earlier narratives. But, in the largest part, at least, the traditions of Jesus's life and words had survived *orally*, and so continued, doubtless, for a generation, perhaps for half a century.\* As we possess them, these first three Gospels are not,

\* Westcott's "Introduction to the Study of the Gospels," p. 181 and following; Carpenter's "Synoptic Gospels," p. 61.

as they perhaps seem, the accounts by their authors of what they personally knew of Jesus, his life and his death. What is true is this. The first three Gospels contain the popular traditions which were current in the Christian community concerning Jesus about half a century after he had passed away. They preserve for us what was then generally believed about him. They include exquisite fragments of his remembered utterances. They contain hints enough of his character to enable us to form a very distinct and trustworthy portrait of him, which is immeasurably precious. But, after all, they are properly described, not as careful biographies by competent, nearly contemporary witnesses, but as anonymous compilations of the traditions of their period.

Thus these writings *reflect* their period. They are, in a literary sense, artless. They are beyond cavil truthful in spirit and purpose; but they preserve the biography of Jesus *as affected by all the prepossessions of such an age and by the ideas and theories which had begun to grow up about him, including naturally and inevitably the element of miracle, the marvellous, the supernatural.*

They could not have come from that age, and not have included this element. It was alive and ubiquitous in the thought of that period. It was expected and looked for in any remarkable career. Of any exceptional man who should present himself as a religious leader, the people were prompt to ask, "What *sign* showest thou that we may believe?" \* Miracle being a thing of every-day life in men's be-

\* John vi. 30; also ii. 18. See also Matt. xii. 28; Mark viii. 12; Luke xi. 16, etc.

lief, its supposed manifestations were described as naturally and artlessly as any other events.

The Fourth Gospel is to be distinguished in some important respects from the other three. It is not merely a compilation of popular traditions and relics of Jesus, such as Luke in his preface expressly describes his own narrative to be, and implies that the others were. The Fourth dates from a much later period,—say A.D. 140,—and is properly a *tract*, written with a purpose, which it candidly avows (chap. xx. 31), to exhibit Jesus in a peculiar character, as the Hebrew Messiah and the Son of God. It is the work of a single hand,\* and, as such, possesses unity, homogeneousness, and consecutiveness in its literary structure. But the tradition that it is by one of the twelve apostles, stoutly as it is defended, is actually a most slender thread, and is visibly yielding to the strain which modern scholarship is putting upon it. For one I do not believe this Gospel to be by an apostle. So far as its historical contents are concerned, then, they are still, in substance, like those of the others. They are still no more than the current popular tradition, amplified and developed by the passage of another half-century. The Fourth Gospel adds nothing to the validity of the testimony of the other three. In fact, its comparative literary artificiality, its later date, and the fact that it was written with an avowed dogmatic purpose, characteristic of a developed stage of Christian opinion, *diminish* the value of its historical testimony. It cannot be ap-

\*And one much too highly cultivated, I cannot but think, for that of a Galilean fisherman.



pealed to with the confidence with which we refer to the others for historical evidence.

To repeat, then, what we have in the Gospels is substantially this,—a compilation of the traditions which were floating in the Christian community forty, fifty, sixty, or a hundred or a hundred and fifty years after Jesus's death, and of the relics preserved of his teachings; these *materials*, originally fragmentary and anonymous, edited and connected together by sympathetic and intelligent hands with such art as they possessed. They possess in their *details*, not the authority which belongs to the asseverations of a trustworthy eye-witness, but the value which attaches to the popular traditions of a sincere, innocent, and adoring, but credulous, unscientific, easily-deluded community of disciples, more than ready to believe miraculous tales.

It is utterly impracticable for the intelligent mind of the present day to be overborne in its judgment of the ways of God by the testimony of such authorities, or would be so but for the influence of custom and of the long-established veneration which these documents have naturally secured. As containing all that we know of Jesus and his utterances, they are beyond estimate precious. We may be infinitely grateful to have so much. We can but admire their simplicity, their candor, their purity, dignity, and grace. But such popular traditions, however charmingly composed, cannot command our belief at points where they would upset all that, in the brightest light of the present age, we seem to know of God and nature. And, fortunately, it is now possible to analyze them,

and largely to account for the phenomena which they present.

Compendiously stated, it is the result of recent scholarship to show with much clearness how the more marvellous characteristics attributed to the person and career of Jesus are the *reflection back* upon them of a subsequent period, when the popular faith had highly, but unnaturally, exalted him, and popular imagination had had time to develop the simple facts of his actual career into the remarkable forms which, at certain points, his story has come to wear.

It is impossible now to tell just what Jesus's disciples thought of him while living; for we have no unqualified testimony to this point, all our testimony having been worked over in the popular mind repeatedly before it took its existing forms of statement. But the things of a marvellous nature recorded in the Gospels must, if true, have been known to his actual companions and early disciples,—for example, his miraculous birth and its attendant prodigies, the visit of the wise men, the descent of the Holy Spirit as a dove at his baptism, and the attestation of his peculiar sonship to God; but *of these things there is no trace in the body of the Gospels, where the life of the apostles with their Master is recorded.* They are never even referred to, much less appealed to, in justification of any claims of a supernatural quality or commission for Jesus. They are obviously *myths*, which grew up in later day, and were *projected back* into the history from the time when Jesus was fully established as a supernatural character in the faith of his people. This is very generally admitted, *of the events I just specified*, by intelligent persons to-day.

But the same, I would have you see, is essentially true of *all the rest* of the miraculous element in the story of Jesus. If we had the real facts, uncolored by tradition and credulous imagination, we should probably find that Jesus's actual followers neither knew him to work miracles, nor perhaps so believed while he was with them. But they wondered at his great endowments. They began to theorize about him, and to think him some peculiar being. They accepted him as the Messiah of the Jews, and the next age made him the Son of God. *Then* the events of his life took on, by degrees, supernatural quality and form and color. The ardent faith of his followers inevitably, but insensibly, filled out the picture of his life and deeds with details imperceptibly growing, into which the miraculous largely entered. What was natural became supernatural. Incidents wholly mythical attached themselves to the story. *And in this condition we have received it.*

This process, as I intimate, was in no sense intentional or dishonest. It was by the spontaneous action of the mental and moral forces of such a time. It was inevitable under the conditions of the period. It is by no means peculiar to the case of Jesus, but paralleled in many others.\* We can even see it, in qualified forms, going on around ourselves in the cases of individuals who become highly idealized in the popular imagination. It is even a little less extensive in its results in Jesus's case than we usually suppose. The purely thaumaturgic miracles ascribed to him, like the turning of water to wine or the blasting of

\* See Carpenter's "Synoptic Gospels," p. 152, following, and 204.

the fig-tree or stilling of the storm, are quite few. A number of the others are plainly misconceptions or exaggerations of natural facts, as the finding of money in the fish's mouth or his walking on the water. The great bulk of the miracles are those of healing, and may almost all represent a power of influence over the minds of the sick, which in its essence would not be uncongenial to so elevated and forcible a character as his, and which is exaggerated rather than perverted in the reports of it which we have received.

But, in the form which they wear, these stories are plainly *mythical growths*, the product chiefly, if not wholly, of the period succeeding the death of Jesus, when faith in him had become intense; when he was fully believed in as a special and supernatural character; when he was eagerly expected to return from heaven, put an end to the existing order of things, and reign with his saints in a glorified state age-long.

The only wonder is that the miracle-stories of the New Testament are not more extravagant than they are. No doubt there was a large body of others, of a more melodramatic quality, like those preserved in the Apocryphal Gospels, which the Christian consciousness, as I have already said, rejected as trivial and unworthy before the canon of the New Testament was closed. Stories of this inferior sort maintained credit with the less educated of the Christian people, as to-day ignorant Catholics believe many fanciful tales of the Madonna and the saints, which their educated fellow-churchmen deride. The superior minds (as those must have been who addressed themselves to the compilation of Jesus's story in these four stand-

ard biographies) naturally rejected almost all of these.\*

Here, then, is what I would have you observe. *Our modern consciousness does but reject the whole miraculous element of these and other ancient traditions as that of the early Church rejected the more absurd and undignified stories of the kind which the popular belief attached to the history of Jesus.*

To the modern mind *all* tales of miracle are *trivial*.

It is a tempting but always treacherous task to attempt to account for the origin and growth of particular mythical stories. It has been well that this task should be essayed as it was, for example, in that monumental work, the "Life of Jesus," by Strauss. But it can never, in any case, be finally convincing. At most, all that one can do in this way is to show how a mythical story *may* have arisen, and thus make reasonable the contention that it *is* mythical. It is pretty easy to account for the story of the money in the fish's mouth as arising in the fact of Jesus's directing his disciple to *sell* a fish, and so obtain the money; or for that of his walking *on* the sea as a mistake for his walking *by* the sea. But such explanations become uncertain as they become intricate, and we are not to hazard a clear conviction that the mythical tendency is a real one, upon our success in showing

\* I may say here that the history of myths abundantly shows that the period between the death of Jesus and the publication of the earliest of the Gospels provides more than ample *time* for the forces which produce the mythical element in such a history to work. Myths are not necessarily a thing of slow growth. Often they spring up, as it were, in a night. The shortest possible allowance of time before the materials embodied in the Gospels took their shape in literature is more than sufficient for the mythical elaboration and coloring to have been effected.

how it may have worked in particular instances. At such a distance, to explain how a certain mythical narrative grew up corresponds in form very closely to the impossible logical task of proving a universal negative.\*

We may *detect* myth in a thousand cases where we cannot possibly explain its particular mode of growth.

I do not propose, then, to attempt to show in detail how the story of Jesus's resurrection grew up. One who rejects it as mythical is by no means bound so to do. To justify the reasonableness of its rejection as authentic history, it is sufficient to detect beyond question in the New Testament the presence of an extensive mythical element, from which come the narratives of Jesus's miraculous birth, with its attendant angels and their celestial songs, of his various miracles, and of his resurrection and ascension, and to refer each and all of these stories to the one common source.

Yet it is quite obvious to any thoughtful student of the times, and of the circumstances of the immediate followers of Jesus, what *general* causes pressed urgently upon them, and favored the belief, which became so intense and effective among them, that he had risen from the dead. Not difficult for men of that generation to accept and credit, it was, on the other hand, absolutely essential for them to have the support and comfort of such a belief. They would have been utterly desolate and hopeless without it. In this sense, the continuance of the movement depended on it, and stood or fell with it.

\* See Lecky's "History of European Morals," vol. i. p. 373; Carpenter's "Synoptic Gospels," pp. 152, 207.

The disciples of Jesus had become fully possessed by the conviction that he realized the Messianic hope of the Jews. While Jesus, if he accepted it for himself, highly spiritualized the Messiah-idea, his followers to the very last, as the Gospels plainly exhibit, thought of it in the conventional, mundane sense common to their nation's imagination. It was to be the glorified but earthly reign of the Messiah over his redeemed people.

The arrest and crucifixion of Jesus suddenly blasted this hope, as applied to him, and filled his disciples with consternation. The whole structure of their selfish anticipations was thrown down. Personally, his nearer followers were left most forlorn; alone, without their leader, in a strange city, and in danger from the Jewish hierarchy and the Roman government on the one side and from the populace upon the other.\*

But, with a little time for the restoration of their composure amid familiar scenes, their hope, which had been for the moment prostrated, would begin to revive. In the actual immortality of the souls of men, Jews of that period were widely accustomed to believe. At least, they were all familiar with the idea. The large and influential Pharisaic party cherished it ardently, although the other great sect, the Sadducees, denied it. The first reassuring thought of the

\* Up to Jesus's death, it should be remembered, his avowed disciples, especially the twelve apostles, were almost all Galileans. They had accompanied him to Jerusalem on his last journey, full of hope in his manifestation of himself as the Messiah; and, when the tragical result occurred, they were far from their homes, and, indeed, like sheep without a shepherd. It is not at all wonderful that they were for the moment astounded and dismayed, and forsook him and fled. The traditions intimate pretty clearly that after his death they did what was most natural,—hurried back to Galilee.

disciples, doubtless, was that Jesus, though dead, was *not* dead, but still in being; that he was in paradise, and that thus, though in ways different from their former expectations, his Messiahship might still be realized and vindicated.

If he was *still in being*, the idea that he should *manifest himself* to some of his followers would have presented no difficulty to men of that time. The spiritual element in men has always, to the ordinary mind, seemed to be one of matter in a state of extreme tenuity, and therefore capable, under some conditions, of becoming tangible to sense.

A very slight cause among persons of that day and in the circumstances of Jesus's disciples would have set in motion the belief that he *had* manifested himself to some of them; and, once started, such a belief would have spread like wildfire.

It is exactly thus, in response to deep necessities of the heart, that myths arise and propagate themselves.

If, for example, it was the fact that, on visiting his tomb a day or two after his interment, the sepulchre was found empty; if Jesus's body had been removed by its custodians, for which there might be many good reasons; if it could not at once be discovered, and its absence was not explained; the inference might readily, and very likely immediately, have been drawn that their Master had arisen from the dead.

If, as the tradition in all its actual forms describes, the first visitors to the tomb were *women*, their more excitable and imaginative natures might easily have been impressed, by some half-seen object or slightly peculiar experience, with the notion that they had met angels or other heavenly messengers.



That the body of Jesus *disappeared* seems the only essential condition of the legend having birth; and to its disappearance the tradition points quite definitely. Matthew tells us that the Jews declared it to have been removed by some of the disciples,—a very credible statement, though rejected by the evangelist. It is the ingenious hypothesis of some that Joseph of Arimathea, who had allowed it to be laid in his new tomb, removed it, lest its presence there should lead to some commotion and embroil him with the Jews.

It seems probable, at any rate, that its disappearance was, in the excited state of mind of the disciples, the original source of the belief in Jesus's resurrection. This cause may have operated at once, and the idea of his return to life may have been generated in those two or three days. It is, perhaps, more probable that it did not spread so suddenly.\*

In the Second Gospel we have the simplest — probably, therefore, the most primitive — account of the events after Jesus's death. That Gospel properly terminates at the middle of the last chapter, as is indicated in the Revised Version. Here, in this earliest form of the story, there is properly *nothing supernatural at all*. How such a tale *grows* is interestingly seen on comparing this primitive form of it with the elaborated accounts in Matthew and Luke, and, still more, with the later one of the Fourth Gospel.

At the moment, it might very well be that the disappearance of Jesus's remains should set in train a

\* See Martineau's "Seat of Authority in Religion," p. 372.

hundred wondering doubts and hopes and theories. That the agitated women at the tomb saw *something* strange, saw *somebody in white*, saw *Jesus himself*,—steps like these would readily be taken by a body of persons otherwise crushed in their dearest hopes, and not in the least fortified by science and mature intelligence against miraculous beliefs.

In fact, what is especially noteworthy about the story of the resurrection is (as I have remarked about the miracles of the Gospels generally) that they are not more abundant and elaborate than they are.\* In the authentic portion of Mark, Jesus's resurrection is *affirmed*, but no reappearance is *described*. And even the appendix (doubtless a wholly genuine relic of the early Christian literature) adds only the briefest statement, not description, of three appearances, of which the latter, at least, is almost incredible, if only from the light in which Jesus is placed by it and the disregard by the eleven apostles of his solemn injunction.

In such vague and general *assertions of a fact* did this afterward confident and wide-spread belief arise.

Matthew's narrative is actually but little more elaborate or more definite. It is stated that an angel appeared to the women, that Jesus himself appeared and briefly spoke to them, that afterwards he met the eleven in Galilee, though some doubted that it was he; and this is all.

In the Third Gospel, which was written, probably, after the lapse of nearly, or quite, three-quarters of a century after Jesus's death, the account is somewhat

\*This, to my mind, points to a later rather than an immediate period for their origin.

further amplified, and its details are a little more definite in form.

But it is not until we come to the Fourth Gospel (which was written, as I have said, under the full prepossession of, and with the avowed purpose to exhibit, the sonship to God of Jesus, and probably not before A.D. 140) that we have a collection of highly elaborated narratives of the intercourse of the risen Master with his disciples.

I have no hesitation, therefore, in my view of the strictly mythical origin of the story of Jesus's resurrection. An examination of the statements in regard to it made by Saint Paul, who is the only nearly contemporary witness whom we are able to identify, only confirms the opinion that it grew essentially out of the primary conviction that *the Messiah could not die*; that Jesus was, therefore, alive after his seeming death; that he appeared, in some ethereal form of manifestation, to his followers. Paul had, of course, no personal knowledge of the facts of Jesus's life. He expressly states how little he cared for, or examined, the testimony of the original apostles. It is altogether doubtful if he regarded Jesus as having risen in the same body which was laid in the tomb. Paul places the appearance of Jesus to himself on the occasion of his conversion, (which certainly, if real, was a visionary manifestation,) *fully and exactly* on a plane with his appearances to the other disciples.

Certainly, whatever be true as to the event of Jesus's return to life, he never effectively resumed his place

among living men after the event of his death. Whatever reappearances of his person are alleged, they are all of a phantasmal character. He enters through closed doors while men are speaking with him. Men doubt about his identity. He is mistaken for a "spirit." The scenes are all dramatic and unreal. Not one of the alleged Christophanies occurred in the presence of opponents; or in public, unless we so class the occasion, barely asserted, but not described, by Saint Paul, when Jesus is affirmed to have appeared to "above five hundred at once." On every occasion *described*, the *incredulity* of some of the witnesses is a marked feature of the occurrence.

One especial word. We must not be misled by the exceeding simplicity and naturalness and artlessness of the gospel narratives into mistaking these characteristics for the tokens of *historic validity and accuracy*. These qualities in the New Testament literature betray certainly, as I have said, the truthful spirit of the writers, and their ingenuous confidence in the reality of the events which they narrate. But, as repeatedly intimated, to men of such an era, *miraculous events were as likely to occur as any others*; and they therefore describe them with the same naturalness and simplicity as normal ones. And, when men report with truthful spirit what they themselves believe, the embellishments with which they unconsciously and instinctively round out their narratives will, usually, be as natural in form, as artless, as truthful-seeming, as the rest of their narrations.

In a word, as applied to the relations of truthful men, describing what they themselves receive

as fact, *verisimilitude is not a test of historical truth.\**

When a man is consciously trying to deceive, his inventions almost inevitably betray him to a critical reader; but when what he tells is true to himself, nature will speak in his unconscious exaggerations as clearly and as simply as in the rest of his story. The legends of the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament are narrated with the same *naïveté* as that which appears and charms us in the narratives of Jesus's miraculous acts. In the passage † where Moses meets Jehovah, to renew the tables of the Law, the narrator (as has been remarked) describes the appearance to a mortal man of the Almighty Creator of the universe, in the same simple terms with which he tells of the man's arising in the morning.

Finally, I would refer to one particular objection very gravely urged by some to bar a doubt of the historical reality of the event of the resurrection of Jesus.

It is said, if this event was not an historical fact, then the faith of the great Christian world, at a most crucial point, rests upon a delusion.

*I think that it does so rest.*

\* Professor J. H. Mahaffy, the eminent student of Greek history and literature, commenting on the artlessness of the style of the Iliad and Odyssey, remarks as follows: "I am convinced that all the critics, even Grote and the skeptical Germans, have overrated the accuracy of the pictures of life given in these poems. *They have been persuaded by the intense reality and the natural simplicity which have made these scenes unapproachable in their charm; and they have thought that such qualities could only co-exist with a faithful and simple reproduction of the circumstances actually surrounding the poet's life.* But surely this argument, irresistible up to a certain point, has been carried too far." ("Social Life in Greece," p. 11.) The italics are ours.

† Ex. xxxiv.

Nor is there anything remarkable or exceptional in this. For it is abundantly illustrated by the facts of the history of religions that, while the moral influence and spiritual value of any form of faith must always be largely in proportion to the reality and truth of its historical and its spiritual sources, the practical issues of faith in belief and act are powerful, not necessarily in proportion to the validity of its foundations, but to its own warmth and vividness. And in the history of religions these qualities have often been exhibited in connection with beliefs the most baseless as to fact and most illogical as to theory. The world-religion which stands next to Christianity in vitality and force, the Mohammedan, certainly rests largely upon illusions. Many of the sects of Christianity have inspired their members to labor unweariedly, to suffer with the utmost fortitude, and to die without flinching in support of the claims of wholly visionary leaders, and for points of doctrine which to Christians of to-day seem trivial. In Mormonism we have had an instance in our own time, and at our own doors, of fanatic zeal by no means dependent on or proportioned to the authenticity or the reasonableness of the basis of a religious system.

And, if it be true that the mighty arch of orthodox Christianity has rested with one pier upon an event which we now determine to be unhistorical, this only parallels the fact that, with the other, it rests upon pure myth in the story of Adam and Eve and the Fall of Man.









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THE REVEALER OF GOD

BY

THOMAS R. SLICER

Minister of the Church of our Father, Buffalo, N.Y.

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## THE REVEALER OF GOD.

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“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”—JOHN xiv. 1.

NOTE the contex, to which this text stands related. Jesus had announced his separation from his disciples. They were his disciples in name: they were his friends in fact. They were under the spell of his personal presence. They were followers of Jesus of Nazareth with the feet and the heart, no more. Now he forbids the feet to follow him further. As a result, the heart is left desolate. Juxtaposition was necessary to make them feel they were with him. But this did not satisfy their Master. Not loyalty to him, but to his ideal, he demanded. By this test the separation had already begun. In the spiritual significance of his life he was already almost out of their sight. He said, therefore: “Ye cannot follow me now. . . . It is expedient that I go away.” To remain locally near and to be spiritually remote is divorce complete.

The disciples were feeling already this separation. They were wondering how they might repair the breach. In spite of his declaration concerning the impossibility of local companionship, Simon Peter insists upon his view: “Lord, why cannot I follow

thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake," still circling in thought around a personal affection. Even this was overrated. Something in the tone of Simon or something in Simon himself led Jesus to reply, and warn him of the denial which Simon would fall into.

Jesus was never content to simply warn concerning sin. He desired always to incite to virtue. He had caused them a genuine distress. He more than ever desired to bring to his dear friends a genuine comfort. How was this to be done? He could suffer John to lean on his breast. He looked upon Judas with sad eyes, and sought to wake his conscience by kindness; but this left the blundering Simon still mistaken, and Thomas full of doubt, and Philip as much a materialist as ever. He must not simply deal with them on the ground of personal love, but meet them upon the ground of a common faith, and console them with that comfort unalloyed, the teaching of a great truth.

A man is comforted indeed who comes into the possession of a great truth. New or old, it matters not, so it be true, and so it be his. He acquires a conscious hold upon some spiritual verity. It passes downward from the gusty height of speculation to the deep quiet of an assured conviction. He is no longer tossed to and fro, seeking to secure a balance of probabilities, but reaches the ground of spiritual certainty.

What was a series of experiments in the art of living passes into an experience of the life. A truth of the unknown world is made known by translation into our common speech. The thing which was an ideal descends and takes its place among life's actualities.

This was the avenue by which Jesus sought to lead the disciples to comfort.

Examine now the avenue of approach to this comfort.


To apprehend a new truth, the soul must already be in possession of a ground to stand on. It may not be larger than the two feet can occupy, but it must be firm. If a man wants to get a steady view, he must stand steadily while he looks. No man can see clearly through a fog, or see far while he is in the trough of the sea. Neither is it good going to any great end to traverse the realm of conflicting opinion, as one crosses a cranberry bog, where the weight must be shifted from one tussock to another to avoid sinking knee deep in the half-floating bog.

So in the vision of truth. He must have some standpoint capable of bearing his whole weight, and sufficiently elevated to give him a wide view. That is a life exceptional and abnormal where all quakes and shivers underfoot. It sometimes happens — thank God, on moral grounds it need not happen irrecoverably — that the moral sense, the organ of spiritual knowledge, seems to disintegrate and soften, — as does the brain, the organ of intellect, — disorganization of the moral powers. Such a man fluctuates, and is uncertain.

Now, it may be answered that this is demanding much. It does not seem much when taken upon the ground of mercantile endeavor. If a man will gain by trading, he must have somewhat to trade with. A man who hopes to acquire a genuine possession, large and rich, cannot trade without capital which is al-

ready his own or else secure to his own undisputed use. But suppose he has no capital, or he cannot exchange commodity for commodity. This is the condition of most men. What do such men do? They cast themselves into the trade,—work power, brain power, vigilance, industry, and fidelity; and, using that best coin from the mint of character, they still are traders.

The parallel is exact in the moral sphere. A man may not be sure of many things. In his heavens not many stars of truth may shine. It may be the heavens are black with storm and impenetrable as midnight; yet the man may plod on under dark skies, and reach home and comfort and rest, provided only he is sure of himself, strong to follow the road which stretches before him surely. Though he can scarcely “see his foot before him,” he can feel his feet under him. This affords common ground, firm ground he is sure of himself. This may seem to you not much in the pursuit of truth, though much in the estimate power. But it is a ground of confidence by no means to be despised. For even this is not always reached at once by men. Often a man has not taken account of himself, has not tested his own integrity. A man cannot be a judge of spiritual verities who has not yet defined his own relationship to the spiritual sphere, has not even confessed in himself the need of a spiritual life,—a life which draws its conscious inspiration from the ever-present spirit of God. He has not found himself.

How can such a man be sure of himself? Each man after his own order and in his own sphere must judge. The spiritual discern all things. 

A mighty change passes over such a man when he first awakes and becomes aware of himself. It oftenest comes in our life by the overwhelming conviction that some pure love has dedicated itself to our salvation, — home love. Some pure love takes up its burden of prophecy of what we might become; and we set about fulfilling the prophecy, discovering thus in ourselves powers we had not known to be in ourselves before. We dedicate ourselves to this new love fallen into our life; and this dedication, written upon the opening page of the book of life, we turn to again and again, to gain the courage to fill the volume with a record of noble life.

Now, if the same process take place on the higher plane of relationship of the soul to God; if, from being sure of himself, the man can make one further step, and refer the moral security to its ultimate ground in God; if he can say sincerely, if not completely, that he believes in God, — such a man, though he may not yet have power to say he “knows whom he has believed,” knowing only thus far in whom he has believed, has in this fact that he believes in God the best possible guarantee that his religion is capable of great enlargement, and will bring to him a quieted heart ere long. He is on the road to the comfort which forbids his heart to be troubled. Thus far had the disciples come who were gathered about Jesus. They believed tremendously in God, heirs of a religion which had this for its characteristic, surviving to this day in Judaism and Mohammedanism, — the faith in “the Eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness.”



Out of this had grown their Messianic hope, mistaken indeed, because they had not passed from believing in God as an object of faith to believing God as an object of love. Their Messiah was to be Jehovah's representative. They had committed themselves to Jesus because he made this claim, appropriated tremendous prophecies, and declared himself anointed of God to fulfil them.

These men had thrown in their lot with him, to test his claim of believing in God.

In these last days of his life the whole superstructure of their faith was in danger of overthrow. He had not gathered to himself the external characteristics which they thought their belief in God justified them in expecting of his King Messiah. Jehovah's representative was there, but not as they had predetermined he ought to appear. Jesus discovers this, and makes haste to occupy the vantage ground of their historic faith. Ye believe in God. Separate well between that and your mistaken views of what I ought to be. Believe not in what you expect of the Messiah, but believe in me.

Now, unless this second clause, "Believe also in me," marked a higher grade of faith than they already possessed, then Christianity added nothing to Judaism. But neither history, biography, or philosophy of religion, will allow us such a position.

If he had said, Ye believe God, believe me also, that would have been an anticlimax; but to say, Ye believe in God, believe also in me, is opening a new door for a nearer approach to divine realities. Ye believe in God absolute. I invite you to

faith in the revelation he makes of himself. We must find some form in which the abstract may become concrete. The absolute must make a revelation. Jesus declares himself such a revelation,—the revelation “God has made in his Son.” Not in the obscure way phrased in dogma, nor in the spectacular way expected by the Jew, but a manifestation of spiritual verities in the terms of human life, an exhibition of eternal attributes as human qualities, a demonstration of the infinite in terms of the finite and concrete, “God in Christ, his anointed, reconciling the world unto himself.”

As the best we can think concerning God is abundantly confirmed by what we find in God’s children, so what we find best in the best of God’s sons is infinitely extended and deepened in God. That man is not fit to judge of the dignity of human nature who does not believe in God. He will certainly think meanly of men. He will not necessarily think men are mean, but his thought of their nature and destiny will move upon a low plane. But he who believes in God can come best and most quickly to believe God by surrender of his faith to some revelation of God in terms familiar. Such a revealer of God is Jesus of Nazareth. God is to be approached by paths familiar, marked by terms accustomed to our use. Thus does there come to pass a reflex action from faith in God to faith in his revealer. Next this revealer’s faith becomes our own, so that it is no longer faith in Christ, but the faith of Christ. And, as we cannot think of Jesus believing in God in any theological or philosophical way, but rather that he believed God in a

personal and consciously present way, so there will pass over us the blessed change, the same change that brought summer into the winter of these hearts about the Lord. We also will gain a sense of God, and feel that God beseeches men by us in Christ's stead.

Our religion will become real. It will be no longer a profession taken on. It will be a possession taking us up. God, our heavenly Father, will no longer be a convenient name for the inscrutable and unknowable. Like his Son, our Lord, we will cry, "Abba, Father," using the names his children use in the Father's house. Our relation to God will be no longer an inheritance which comes with our blood from hearts of holiness in our past remote. It will be a relation conscious and vital. We will be no longer wasted by a desolation we cannot explain when some sudden movement forward of scientific thought strikes our shield of faith, traditional and lightly held, through and through, and casts it broken at our feet, and we are covered with shame to see how frail a thing we had fastened on, and called our faith. We will no longer cry, "Ye have taken away my God." Our religion will be a matter too high to be obscured by either dust or smoke, will go too deep to be disturbed by any surface changes in our affairs. Its expression will be the voice of the heart crying out of its depths into the deep above, which, waiting, hears its answer, which is not an echo, the reverberation of our own voice in a vacant heaven, but the voice of another,—a voice articulate and clear to the inner sense. And we shall find ourselves saying, "How

precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!"

Do you ask how all this is related to comforting troubled hearts? how this is an exposition of the meaning of the words of Jesus,—“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me”? I answer it is the statement of that great truth which the Son of Man uttered. All things are possible to him that believeth. Almost all our trouble of heart comes of doubt,—doubt suggested by our limitations, doubt suggested by our endeavor to remould a world made already too well for us to mend, made already too strong almost for us to hurt. But, if in Jesus or in that world of spiritual reality which was his world we shall get a vision of God as our Father, the world as his world, ourselves as his children, all things will seem possible to our recovered faith. We shall say with Paul, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” And if “God, who withheld not his own Son, his unspeakable gift, delivered him up to us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” A human spirit becomes thus the mediator between our timid doubts and the divine realities. A gift so large as this perfect love becomes the measure which suggests love and bounty infinite. This righteous servant of God shall not fail nor be discouraged until he hath set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law.

Said Paul, “We see not yet all things put under us, but we see Jesus,” as the representative of that divinely anointed humanity to which the final triumph of righteousness is secured. He is the representative

to us of the moral order. When a man has once seen the sun, it is not hard for him to believe in all light, from that kindled on summer nights by the glow-worm to that kindled in summer skies by the thunder-bolt. All light is one.

Whatever in the terms of human life is true is true at the source of human life in God. Whatever in man is pure aspiration and uplifting desire is in God as surely pure affection and down-coming satisfaction of our desire. For supply is with God the other member of that equation of which demand is the only member we know at first. "He openeth his hand, and we are filled with good."

The Psalmist said: "With the good thou wilt show thyself good, with the perfect man thou wilt show thyself perfect, with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure. For thou wilt light my candle. The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." It is indeed true that the character and presence of God are conditioned to us upon the terms on which moral qualities make their appeal to us. Nothing can be true to us beyond the limits of experience. And because of the wide horizon which Jesus sees around his cross of sacrifice, because of the consciousness that he has that the Father is with him, because he knows reflected in his own pure soul what it is to "see God," therefore he invites these troubled disciples, therefore he invites us to make his experience ours, assuring us that, if we believe in God, we ought also to believe in God revealed in his Son, and that this will lead us so to believe God himself and rest in him that we will no longer let our hearts be troubled nor afraid.

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JOSEPH MAY  
THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

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SIN AND FREEDOM

BY

THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

Minister of All Souls Church, New York

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SERIES 11

APRIL 23, 1893

No. 24

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## SIN AND FREEDOM.

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“Sin shall not have dominion over you.”—ROM. vi. 14.

THERE is something in human nature which resists the commandments of God. That is the solemn affirmation of Saint Paul. It is confirmed by the conscience of all spiritual men. Any view of religion, any thought of ourselves, any practical plan of life, which leaves out of sight this fundamental fact, is sure to go wrong.

Let us look at some of the different interpretations of this fact which are possible.

First is the theory of our total depravity. From Saint Paul's passionate writings theologians have built up a sublimely logical conception of a human nature, fallen in Adam's sin, incapable of any real goodness or any successful endeavor to be good, which can be “saved” only by a miracle. Divine grace overthrows and annihilates the “natural man,” and, literally regenerating the soul, makes a new man in place of the old one. This new birth is conversion. The new-born man, a child of God, is in every respect the exact opposite of the natural man, who was a child of the devil.

I will not enlarge upon this system of thought, for its hold on the world has almost wholly passed away. It survives in the creeds, but not in the thought or



feeling of the present time. No Christian parents to-day would permit Jonathan Edwards to call their children "vipers." No decent man believes himself naturally incapable of any truly good action. No thoughtful or reasonable man believes that human nature as such is vile, hateful, deserving of eternal torture at the hands of an angry God. The mere statement of the old doctrines in their logical nakedness is sufficient to refute them.

So we put the total depravity theory away as an exploded hypothesis, remembering only that it had at the bottom of it a sense of the divine holiness, so profound that, in comparison with that white light of divinity, the human creature appeared like a spot of blackness in the centre of the spiritual universe. We are so far from the moral danger of Calvinism that we may safely look upon it with respectful admiration, as one of the most colossal structures ever reared by the human mind upon a few mistaken foundations.

Secondly, we may consider a theory exactly the opposite of Calvinism. It found its most eloquent literary expression in Rousseau. It animated the French Revolution. It has inspired much of modern literature and art. The theory is that all men are born good. Pure human nature is pure innocence. The savage in his forest, the child at his play, is all lovable, all true. But this lovely angel-man, this darling of Nature, soon lost the innocence of his first estate. He lost his child-heart, and became a cruel, sensual monster. He lost his heavenliness, and became a vile, earth-stained, sordid, stupid wretch,

whose only salvation is to "return to Nature" and to become a child again. Now, what has wrought this "fall of man" from his native innocence to his actual sinfulness? The answer of Rousseau's philosophy, and of this whole sentimental school, is that man is corrupted by society and civilization. The noble savage becomes the base human creature which Rome and Paris knows. Bad laws, social conventionalities, and especially priests and tyrants, spoil our sweet, noble manhood, until what should be a glad, flowery garden of a world, wherein all men might live simply and lovingly as joyful children of a common Father, becomes this groaning old Europe, so full of miseries, where Bonnivard is in a dungeon, and Du Barry upon a throne. Therefore, "To arms! Strike down the tyrants!" Tear down the Bastile! Pass new and better laws! Declare all men equal and free! Abolish slaves and poverty! Trust the people to do right! Let us have fraternity and democracy! Let us cast away the foolish bondage of man-made laws and customs, and let us live on earth once more, like Paul and Virginia, like Crusoe and Man Friday, trusting to the inexhaustible wellspring of virtue which is in the uncorrupted human heart.

All honor to this brave and amiable doctrine! It wrought the world good service. One wishes it were true. It was a glorious and most useful reaction against Saint Augustine and Calvin. A beautiful, bright, golden illusion is certainly much better than a hideous nightmare. Most of us would rather live under Rousseau's gospel than under Calvin's.

But nothing that is false can fail of doing harm in

the long run, and therefore the common sense of the world to-day is just as far from Rousseau as it is from orthodox theology. The native innocence theory stands discredited as thoroughly as that of total depravity. It was all wrong in its affirmation. We have found out that savages are not in the least angelic, but, on the contrary, are beastly and bloody and irrational. We have found that children have in them all the germs of evil as well as of good. It was all wrong in its negation. Instead of being corrupted by society and human law, we find that human goodness is social to the very core, and that the reverence for law and justice as embodied in human institutions lies at the foundation of the best and most important virtues. And so we do not say, as the sentimentalists did, that civilization is a failure and the cause of all that is bad and wicked; but, on the contrary, we look to the process of civilization as the great hope of the world. We say that the defects of civilization are due to the defects, wickednesses, and ignorances of human nature.

Thirdly comes a theory of man's moral nature which seems to account for all the facts recognized by the last two and for many more. It has two great words,— education and evolution. The key-note was struck by Lessing in the "Education of Humanity." It has its scientific expression in the doctrine of evolution. By the light of this truth we see that *human nature is neither all good nor all bad, but unfinished*. The remedy for sin is more life. The way to make men better is to develop their faculties and impulses in the direction of goodness. You notice that this

theory differs from the two old theories in that it is not an attempt to find out what man was at the beginning, whether we were born depraved or born good. It shows that the whole human race and each member of it is in a process of growth. The question it asks is not, What were we when we were born? or What is natural manhood? but, rather, What can be made of man? Just as we do not care so much what the wild apple, the wild grape, or the original potato may have been, but occupy ourselves with cultivated fruits and vegetables, so with human nature. The best varieties are domesticated. Domestication is an art and a science. It is slow. It is also sure. The results attained are surprising and almost without limit.

So far as concerns the human race as a whole, this is a very hopeful view of the situation. It makes us believe that mankind can be improved to an extent we cannot now foresee. If we have produced a boneless shad, a stingless bee, a seedless orange, why not a sinless man? If the dog, the cousin of the wolf, has been made gentle, loving, and intelligent, why cannot man, the cousin of the ape, be bred and trained into a fancy breed that will keep the ten commandments?

But how is it as concerns the individual? The future perfection of the race is a grand and inspiring subject. But that is something we shall not live to see. The practical question for us is, How far can moral education succeed within the limits of a single lifetime? Can you and I leave the improvement of our characters to posterity? or has each one of us the heavy responsibility of improving himself?

Now, as compared to the theologian with his total

depravity craze, and the sentimentalist with his native innocence craze, we stand, with our modern scientific view of man, in a much more practicable situation. And, really, we retain what was practical in both.

The theologian says, "The individual man cannot save himself: no man without help from above can attain his true manhood." We admit this to be true. Man is born in sin; that is, he requires help and inspiration from a power mightier than his own will. This is probably true of all men. And in the case of the worst and weakest it is undeniably true. Therefore, we will *help* the poor, struggling human will. We must educate, train, and develop. God does not save men by miracle, but by laws of life. New life comes to men not only directly from God, but indirectly through education; and education includes government, society, science, sanitation, literature, the arts, and religion itself. We will regenerate the wayward, rebellious, earth-bound human creature with all these "saving ordinances." We will baptize the individual to new life by immersing him body and soul in the life of the total humanity, which is the embodiment of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, the sentimentalist said, "Human nature is bad because human institutions are bad: therefore, let us abolish them, and be free." Modern thought answers that we will make better institutions: Modern thought recognizes that much of what we call sin is the effect of bad drainage, corrupt politics, artificial vices, and manufactured lusts. Yet there really is an art of living. The remedy for our troubles is not to bring back a state of untrained, un-

disciplined humanity, but to substitute a true art of living for a false one. The art of living must be arrived at by means of experiments. Some of these will be unsuccessful. Nevertheless, we must go forward. We will send the human race to school, as in the past. But the school shall be a better one. Our new education accepts all that was true and practical in the last-century reaction toward nature and freedom. The old repressive methods are gone. We respect the child's natural tendencies at the very time we are trying to make a different sort of creature. We will not try to run all our pupils into one mould. We respect the peculiarities of the individual, and give to each one as much freedom as we safely can.

This new method is applied to religion. The old theology invented catechisms, convents, persecutions. It tried to give one creed to all. It demanded that all men should come to the Christian life through one distinct type of conversion. The new theology allows for freedom, and admits that we need not all say the same words in order to have a fellowship in work and prayer. The old theology tried to force its iron dogma upon the reluctant reason and the rebellious flesh. The new theology assures us that religion is the most reasonable, the most delightful expression of our true and deepest life. It is not the mortifying and prostration of our powers, but the harmonizing, the spiritualizing, of the whole man, so that with soul and heart and mind he may "love the Lord our God," and enter into his true birthright. Therefore, the church, the creeds, the liturgies, which the old church put upon us as a heavy burden, the new church

offers as helps to the spiritual life. The old system was like the appliances Japanese gardeners use to dwarf and deform a growing tree. The new system supplies a trellis on which the vine may climb more easily, more unentangled, and more fruitful. My creed shall not stop my thinking, but help me to think clearly and to share the thinking of my fellow-worshippers. My habits of worship, my Sabbaths and visible signs, shall help me to a steadier, soberer faith, and save me from the tyranny of moods.

Thus it appears that what we now know of human nature, when applied in the sphere of religion, saves us from the theology which would see nothing in man but sin, and from that which saw nothing but goodness.

And, practically, when we meet the fact of evil in ourselves and other individuals, we are not permitted either to call evil good or to say that to fight against it is useless.

How it may be in the millennium for a better breed of men, how it may be in heaven for spirits of just men made perfect, we cannot tell. But for ourselves, in our present state of being, the condition of struggle and progress is characteristic of the human soul.

The blessing of perfect peace is not for our daily living. The gifts of God which we most need in the actual warfare of this world are courage, wisdom, and strength.

It is important to see how our largest, newest thoughts of human nature confirm the spiritual insight of Saint Paul, that there is a conflict of powers in the very heart of us.

This is the spiritual truth which gives such passionate interest to the daily drama of life. Men are interesting because we feel that every life, every act, is the result of contending forces, and that the nature of the result is always either victory or defeat.

This truth brings us to a sane position in regard to the old problem of free will. How much power has any man to fashion his own character, to make his own life? How much is each one of us the creature of circumstance? How much is temperament the tyrant of us all?

Believing, as I do, in the moral freedom of every human soul, let me explain what that belief means.

It does not mean that there are no laws of spiritual growth, not that by a vigorous effort you and I might be saints and angels to-morrow, or anything we please to-day. It does not mean that there is nothing to resist our efforts after the desired end of moral perfection.

The belief in moral freedom rests on the fundamental truth that there is in every man a struggle of opposing forces, like that which Saint Paul describes in the seventh chapter of Romans. Our moral freedom does not create the conditions of the fight. You did not give yourself your temperament. You did not create the passions of human nature. You did not attach to the different impulses of your nature the varying degrees of intensity which they originally have. It is not your doing that some temptations are more dangerous, some faults more odious than others. All these things are simply the conditions of the fight, the laws of the game.



Your freedom consists in your ability to better your situation by your own honest, patient effort. No man who is honestly striving against the powers of evil within him need ever fight a losing battle.

This being granted, as the verdict of common sense, the question then rises, How far should we accept the faults of our natures, the downward tendencies in ourselves, as inevitable?

At this point the doctrine of the Bible is particularly clear, positive, helpful, and, moreover, in accordance with common sense. When I say the Bible, I mean the best of the Bible, and especially the teaching of Jesus.

The Bible recognizes the universal fact of sinfulness. "It must needs be that offences come." This makes for charity, pity, and patience. "Neither do I condemn thee," that is the word of pity, of philosophy; but "Go, and sin no more," that is the word of hope, the word of religion.

The Bible, then, while counting all men sinners, says that there is in every man the power to rise up and leave the particular form of sin into which he has fallen.

Every man is free to take victorious steps toward a higher life, free to repent,—that is to hate and reject his evil past,—free to be converted,—that is, to turn with earnest desire and prayer toward a better future,—free to be more and more successful in his progress toward his ideal.

That we are so, both conscience and Scripture agree to certify. But the doctrine of the Bible is that our freedom so to do depends upon a truth which is deeper

still,—namely, that what God commands he gives us power to become; or, in other words, the demands of the moral law, the claim of Christ, only require that we should be what God meant us to be, and what his whole universe helps us to be. The moment I put forth an effort toward goodness I am like a tree which sends a root down into “rivers of water.” Every effort of a righteous will has God’s omnipotence behind it. That is the joyous word of faith which is added to the anxious struggle of “mere morality,” “thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory.”

The truth is that the old question of freedom and fate is for the schools, and not for life; for the limits of our real freedom are always far beyond the perceptions of our moral sense. Practically, the feeling that you ought to do or be a certain thing is an evidence that it is in your power so to do or be. When Duty whispers low, “Thou must,” the soul replies, “I can”; and, therefore, there is no such thing as a moral inability in the sphere of present duty. For to-day’s task the strength is given; and the problem of to-morrow, though now it seems impossible, will bring its own solution. A great Frenchman said, “Between thy couch and the frontiers of the world there are two steps,—will and faith.” It is true: will for to-day, faith for to-morrow,—that is the believing attitude of all strong souls.

The reality and the limitation of our moral freedom, practically unlimited, but theoretically limited, admit of many illustrations. The eagle is free to soar above the peaks of the Alps, but not, above the limits of the atmosphere. The fish in the sea cannot leave

the watery element. The deer is free only within his forest. But these creatures have no wish to pass the bounds which God has set. So it is with man in his moral constitution. He is not free to be an angel, because, in fact, he does not want to be. But he is free to be a man, and to fill the full area of his human capacities, so far as they lie within the sphere of conscience.

I say within the sphere of conscience. When people talk of fate, of destiny, of the soul that beats its wings in vain against the cage of Time, they mean limitations in things which do not concern conscience. It is true that you and I cannot be Shakespeares or Napoleons or Beethovens, but neither does conscience ask us so to be. Genius and fortune are not our achievements, but the gifts of Heaven. As Marcus Aurelius would say, "Though thou canst not wear the purple of a Cæsar, yet thou canst be a Roman and a man."

The things which God really requires of us are of extreme simplicity and quite within reason. We are not asked to imitate Christ in his sinless perfection nor in his miracles, but only in his lowliest service, his love, his obedience, his sacrifice.

"If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

Conscience, as so interpreted by faith, is not only a teacher of duty, but marks what grade of moral power a soul has attained.

If you feel the unworthiness of your present self, if you have within a longing for a truer and more fruitful life, that unrest in your heart, that aspiration

within, means that the new life can be yours if you will pay the price of effort and patience.

What you feel you ought to be is God's witness in your heart of what you can be.

Alas for the unawakened conscience which lies, as Scripture says, "dead in sin," having no sorrow for its past and present evil, no desire, no ideal, no marching on, no upward reach of strife and tears! but "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Freedom, then, is the gift of God in our moral nature. Its limitations lie beyond our reach, beyond our daily problem and duty. In philosophy we can see that there are limits. In life there are no limits we need ever feel.

There is no fate:  
 Thy high or low estate  
 Comes of thy climbing or thy falling down.  
 No baleful star  
 A brave man's bliss can bar,  
 No kingly planet keep a coward's crown.

Dost thou complain  
 Because God's frost and rain  
 To thy white cheek seem much too wet or cold?  
 Dost thou not know  
 How whirlwind, storm, and snow  
 Swathe earth in robes of silver, fold on fold?

Cease, luckless man,  
 To curse thy being's plan;  
 For, wert thou to thine own true birthright true,  
 Thou wert set free,  
 As are the winds, the sea,  
 Or eagles mounting in the trackless blue.



THE  
WEEKLY EXCHANGE

A SERIES OF SERMONS

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP  
THOMAS R. SLICER

JOSEPH MAY  
THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

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THE AMERICAN IDEA

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP

Minister of the Unitarian Congregational Church, Syracuse, N. Y.

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## THE AMERICAN IDEA.\*

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WE are tired of the old Fourth of July style of oratory. It did very well when we were not quite sure of our national position, and had to lift ourselves up, as the man does in the hydrostatic paradox, by our own breath. But it is at last admitted on all sides that we are a first-rate nation, with a first-rate destiny. We need no longer assert it so loudly, because we feel it more deeply. The boy pulls incessantly at his incipient whiskers. The man knows his are there, and leaves them alone. They only serve to remind him that he is a man. Perhaps, however, you say, "Americans can no more help boasting than they can avoid going to the post-office. They inherit it as an heirloom from the Anglo-Saxon race." Well, in some sense it is their duty to boast, just as it is the hen's duty to cackle when she has laid an egg. The noise she makes tells the dairy-maid where to look for to-morrow's breakfast. Just so, when Americans glory wisely, glory in the good things God and brave toil have brought to pass, glory in the new-found possibility of a freedom which prophets and kings desired to see in vain, then they call the world's attention to great, magnificent facts,—just the very facts the world wants.

\*This is an address, not a sermon. It treats things with a touch too light to be appropriate to a sermon. Nevertheless, I trust that the deep importance of its theme will justify its introduction into the Weekly Exchange.

S. R. C.



If, then, America must boast, let her boast not so much of her achievements as of her Idea, not so much of what she has done, but of the task God has set her to do. Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord. That glorying is one with the profoundest humility.

What, then, is the American Idea? Swedenborg says that the language of the angels is very concentrated, as they often say in *one word* more than could be said in many thousands in any earthly language. Perhaps, then, when the angels say the word "Man," they include in that all his infinite possibilities, his inevitable development, his ever-unfolding history, and the unspeakable grandeur of his final destiny.

Be that as it may, the American Idea is indeed the idea of Man as Man,—in one word, the American Idea is *Man*.

The American Idea, then, is Man mere, not Man and something more,—not Man and a wig to make a judge, Man and a gown to make a preacher, Man and a title to make a legislator, Man and a crown to make a ruler. The American Idea roughly pushes aside all these accessories, and takes its stand on Manhood pure and simple. Man's justice can make laws without the help of the barber's shop. Man's adoration, Man's intuition, can give his religion voice, with no aid from tailor or milliner. A De or a D.D. before or after a man's name adds no jot to his insight; and no jeweller can put royalty on a fool's head. The kingship must be in the Man. Man, then,—Man his own lawgiver, prophet, priest, king,—that is the American Idea. When God crowns a

man, then, and then only, does the American Idea say, Amen.

Now, what is our distinctive glory among the nations? We have no time-honored cathedrals, sacred legacies handed down by the worship of the past, no stately palaces, no vast museums, no gorgeous picture galleries, no great ancestral names, no history going back far into the darkness of the past, no titled aristocracy fenced about with courtly manners. Take away from us our belief in Man, and we have nothing left. Leave us that, and in time we will reproduce all that is grand in the old, and add to it all the glory of the new.

Let us fairly admit at the outset that one of the irresistible ambitions of America is size. So far, European opinion of us is quite justified. To vast areas of soil vast populations must be fitted. Great nations must have great cities. We can hardly think of France without Paris, of England without London. London is London because it has four million inhabitants. Without that, no Crystal Palace, with its acres of glass; no Kew Gardens, with the plants of every zone; no Zoölogical Gardens, with every known animal; no British Museum, with every book and fossil, — with its summary of art in all ages. London is an epitome of the planet.

The great nation, too, needs millions of hands, — in the fields, in the mines, in the ships, and in the workshops. Everywhere each pair of hands is, or should be, one more source of power to the great nation, so that, other things being equal, the nation that owns the most pairs of hands, and the most heads

above the hands, is the most powerful. And, if this is true everywhere, doubly true is it here, where every man is busy, every man adds his item to the national wealth. No drones in all this mighty hive!

True, it is absolutely necessary for us to make a stand against the vulgar conception of the dignity of brute numbers.

To the commonplace man numbers mere are divine. One man with a conviction is to him an insignificant unit in the surrounding millions. The word of a thousand people begins to be respectable; of a hundred thousand, significant; of a million, powerful; of fifty millions, divine. It is impious to go against that. "Vox populi, vox Dei." "The people, right or wrong," is the vulgar motto. Nevertheless, numbers have a certain divine significance, and form an essential part of America's future.

In a thousand years from now the last thousand years of history will be viewed as the period of the development of nations of the second class; for a thousand years hence no nation will be considered first-class that does not number at least a hundred million inhabitants.

Now, I believe that America is destined to be the first in time of the first-rate nations of the world. In a quarter of a century America will number a hundred millions. Think of it! A hundred millions of men believing in God's justice and man's destiny! What despot in the wide world would dare to enslave or oppress if such a nation said him nay?

The American Idea, then, requires numbers; for the American land, which is the body of which the

American Idea is the soul, is so vast that it requires a vast amount of that life-blood of which each human soul is a drop before its heart can beat and its circulation flow with adequate force and fulness. The desert must be peopled, and the Pacific Railroad must run across a continent swarming with men from New York to San Francisco, before the American land comes into its own, before the American Idea can find adequate numerical expression, before the voice of America can get volume enough to echo from shore to shore and across the Atlantic deep.

Secondly, the American Idea requires numbers because it must be first proved here, beyond controversy, that man is capable of self-government on the grandest scale; that a free republic is capable of indefinite expansion, without the least danger to its permanence; that absolute justice to all men is a foundation for a State more solid than any throne.

Thirdly, the American Idea requires numbers, for there are a great number of human beings in the world; and, therefore, the American Idea has a mission to many men. It has, in short, a gospel to proclaim to nearly a billion of human beings at present on the earth, and to several, in fact, to a quite indefinite number of billions, who are still among the inevitable things of the future. It needs numbers to illustrate its principles by; for its mission is to the million, to the sons of toil, to the lower classes, to the scum, the mudsills, the slaves everywhere. Its mission is to bid all such arise up, and be men. Here, first, it must prove itself by nobleness achieved, by justice done to every man among all its millions; and

then its sound shall go out into all lands, and its words to the ends of the world.

I. All greatness has its enemies. Every low thing is the foe of America's high Idea. The first, the most conspicuous foe we have to fight is political corruption, especially in large cities. This, up to date, has been the most glaring failure of our democracy. New York, our proudest city, got rid of its Tweed only twenty-three years ago. It is wholesome discipline to remember this. Twenty-five years ago the merchants, the responsible men in New York, were so absorbed in their own private affairs that they had no time to see, no time even to think, how their great city was governed. The public sentiment had grown so utterly apathetic that it seemed a question if even a thunder-clap would arouse it. The old man of the sea had been so long on Sinbad's neck that it seemed impossible to shake him off,—so weak had Sinbad grown. The gentlemen and men of principle in New York had become so used to being insulted, hooted at, and stamped down by a mob of ignorant, brutal rowdies that it seemed as if they had been robbed of the last ounce of dignity and self-respect, and that they would meekly submit to any amount of kicking that their foreign rulers chose to inflict. It was not till a tenth of the whole taxable property of the city had been mortgaged, not till the labor of tens of thousands of citizens was used up in merely paying the interest on the city debt, not till the stealing had amounted to tens of millions, not till actual municipal ruin was threatened, not till the very existence of New York, as the commercial me-

tropolis of the New World, was in imminent danger, not till then was the public sentiment aroused enough to go to work, and keep at work until something should be accomplished. It was time that something should be done; for thoughtful men everywhere had begun to say to themselves in private, "If this is to be the outcome of republican institutions in all large cities,—namely, that the mob shall put its leaders into all high places; that thieves and cut-throats shall themselves elect the judges that are to try them; that prize fighters, gamblers, and pickpockets shall be the representative men into whose hands the task of the guidance of our destinies is to be placed; that the ballot-box shall become a farce, the franchise a thing to be bought and sold, and justice itself be dealt out to the highest bidder,—if every municipal contract is to be, as a matter of course, a colossal job; if every official is to have his price; if the control of a great legislature is to be simply a question of dollars; if honor and stainless integrity and resolute ability are to be positive disqualifications for office,—then the sooner we have a despotism, the better."

The story of Tweed and his henchmen is at once a warning and an encouragement. It shows that there is something in our American air which is perilously productive of political corruption. Certain ill weeds grow apace here. But there is also something exceedingly perilous to the ill weeds themselves, when they have got overrank, and their offensive odor begins to fill the air. "Provision is made that trees do not grow into the sky"; and, assuredly, provision seems to be made that ill weeds do not grow into the sky.

Here, I take it, is the most hopeful sign. There is still health enough in the body politic to strangle the ill life out of the ill weed at last. Our late history is strewn with the cut-down, dried-up, and withered remains of what once seemed vast, interminable forests of political iniquity. The huge, misshapen growth proved to be only a mass of ill weeds, which one stroke of the scythe of public indignation cut down.

But what are we to do in the future? We have jumped with closed eyes into the hazardous experiment of allowing foreign ignorance to have the casting vote in our politics. If it is absolutely impossible to retrace our steps and set up an educational standard for our voters, the only remedy left is compulsory education. We must prevent ignorance from going to the polls by seeing to it that there shall be no such thing as an ignorant voter. We must educate, or we are lost. It is a slow remedy, and it will take years before it is plainly seen to tell; but it is the only sure one. We must also see to it that the highest mind in our land is represented in our politics.

In politics we have any amount of supple ready talent, any amount of hand-to-mouth politicians, who can see cunningly to the 4th of March or the first Tuesday in November. We have only too few men learned in the political history of the past, and wise to use the lessons thence learned for the guidance of the present. We must see to it that a career shall be open to such minds. They will rise soon enough when we have done our part. The cry for civil ser-

vice reform must swell louder and louder, till it becomes the voice of the nation itself. One thing is to be said here. It is time that the perpetual excuse of "We are a young country" should be put an end to. We are a young country; but at this hour we are a first-rate nation, with a first-rate destiny. In a few years we shall be acknowledged by all nations to be the first power on earth. It is always tragic to see first-rate power yielded by second-rate ability. Imagine a hundred million half-developed, self-conceited, inflated minds raised by some caprice of Fate to the position of arbiters of the world, serenely unconscious of what a farce it is they are called upon to act. If a half-educated America, then, is to be the strongest will in the world, so much the worse for the world. It was sad, but yet it was grand, for the world's centre of action to be found in the heart of a sublimely selfish Napoleon. It will be equally sad, but the reverse of grand, if a hundred million hucksters, stock-jobbers, money-grinders, tricksters, knaves, and fools become the centre. Let us be assured that this danger is not altogether chimerical as long as we keep crying that first-class culture is an impossibility in America.

Now, the fact is that our young men are as keen, as ambitious, as easily excited toward a fine aim, as any youth on the earth. Nay, more: there is here less indolence, less vice, less of the poisonous idea that it is gentlemanly to do nothing and be nobody, than perhaps anywhere under the sun. Promise a first-class career in literature or science or art or politics to our finest young men, and you need not fear



that they will be either too indolent or too weak to prepare themselves for it.

II. But enough of the political situation. Let us now proceed to ask what are the social dangers which imperil the American Idea. Most of these can be included in two divisions: first, the mean refusal to level up; second, the mean desire to level down. The first is the peculiar crime of an aristocratic, the second of a democratic, society. In our cosmopolitan America both dangers confront us.

1. The formation of castes in society is going on before our eyes, and will keep going on with increasing rapidity unless those who have arrived at thought and culture at once take hold with a will to impart thought and culture to those who would otherwise become "the submerged tenth." In this way alone can we refuse the evil and choose the good which aristocratic societies have given to the world.

The one grand thing about an aristocracy is its pride of port, its conscious dignity, its sense of a lofty position, and of the needs of behavior corresponding to that position. The world's aristocracies have invented the world's manners. It is they who have shown by gallant examples how brave the heart, how high the bearing, how gracious the manners, how confident the mien of each man ought to be.

Now, mark it well, the distinctions of gentleman and lady are not done away with, never can be done away with, in America or anywhere else. On the contrary, the distinction is here to be made more real, less conventional, than elsewhere. A superficial polish can often be obtained in Europe by a

very ungentlemanly man, an external courtesy may be forced by society on a rude man's lips; but here the grand old name of gentleman shall only be given to the gentleman at heart, whose soul is full of chivalrous feeling, whose manners indicate the true heart within, whose courtesy is not of the lips only, but of the feelings also. The American gentleman, then, is to unite all the gentlemanhood of the Old World with the ideas of the New, losing no jot of polished bearing, keeping every atom of grace and refinement in movement, in speech, in gesture, being as much as ever the chivalrous protector of the weaker sex; but he is to add to this the contempt of the New World for all arrogance, all exclusiveness, all claiming his gifts as his only or as belonging to his class alone. He is to add the belief of the New World in man as man, which teaches him that a possible gentleman sleeps in the breast of every man of woman born.

To sum up all, to be a gentleman or a lady in the American sense you must be a Christian. It is Christianity alone which can make you real enough to stand this test. It is Christianity alone which can teach you to be careful of the rights of others, mindful of your own duties, helpful of human nature, and desirous of extending to all that bear the manhood that Jesus bore the true helping hand of Christian fellowship. For, after all, this American democracy of ours is a Theocracy. In the last analysis it is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." What are we governed by, if it is not by God's law of right? What do we appeal to but to God's throne of con-

science in the heart of man? What do we believe in but that God hath made of one blood all men that live on the face of the whole earth? Who can estimate the grandeur of this idea? Who is worthy of it? Nowhere do we see it wholly incarnated, not the best of us is an adequate witness for it; but yet I see it at times look out of manly young faces, and detect a hint of it in many a woman's gentle ways. This Idea, then, is what the world is waiting for.

When a foreigner comes to this country, all seems one level to him at first. I should like to say to him at once: "Do not suppose that, because we have no dukes and lords, we have no lordly and kingly men. The only difference is that our kings are real kings."

There is an aristocracy here,—an aristocracy not of wealth, but of blood; and, new as the country is, its aristocracy is the oldest in the world, dating back past the Crusades, past Greece, Rome, beyond the deluge, beyond the Garden of Eden, up to the eternal purpose of the Eternal Father himself. It consists of those who know that they are the sons and daughters of one higher than the kings of the earth, of one who is King of kings and Lord of lords,—who know this not for themselves alone, but for all mankind, who seek to make all mankind, irrespective of race, caste, or color, inheritors of that grand knowledge, claimants of the same royal prerogative. Such are constantly employed in raising up the lowly and in lifting up the bowed down. But, in raising others, they raise themselves, also, unaware. They will ever stand in the foremost files of time. They will ever be held in honor. They will shine in heaven as well

as here, as the brightness of the firmament, as the stars, forever and ever. Does any covet their place? "Go thou, and do likewise."

The American Idea will have no exclusive classes, keeping aloof in fancied superiority from all below them,—no unapproachable upper stratum of society, whose special business it is to keep the people out of its charmed circle. No! its word to social pretension of any kind is: "Friend, if you have any gift of manners, courtesy, dignity, chivalrous behavior, intellect, refinement,—in short, any good and gracious gift,—impart it to us and to all. Who so glad to receive it as we? Communicate that refinement, that chivalry, to all around you. Freely God gave it to you, freely give it to your neighbor. But, if there is nothing real about you,—no true superiority of any kind,—then, poor pretender, hide your head in a corner, and weep. America needs not such assistants as you."

The tendency of an artificial aristocracy has ever been to exclusiveness; and much outward and some inward refinement has doubtless been gained by keeping aloof from all so-called low and vulgar associations. But such exclusiveness is utterly contrary to the American Idea. Refinement must be gained here in some other way.

The *one mean* thing in an aristocracy has always been the cool ignoring of the rights of unaristocratic men to have any such high bearing, the cool assumption that none but they can have noble manners, that a man must have a handle to his name before he can enjoy the luxury of high honor or assume the dignity

which belongs by right to every son of God. For what can be meaner than to lyingly pretend that a man has not got what he really possesses? What could be meaner in a man of science than to pretend that another man, who knows as much as he, is not a scientific man?

When such exclusive natures depart to the other world, says my Swedenborgian friend, they make for themselves a curious and quaint sort of hell, which they consider, of course, the very heaven of heavens. For you will notice that it is the fantasy of such minds to look with sublimest pity, as well as contempt, upon all that are not of their set. There they inhabit certain mud hovels, which they christen palaces, castles, châteaux, and what not; and to them they appear to be such, and they strut about in parti-colored rags, which they consider the most resplendent court dresses, bowing to each other with all the state that two turkey-cocks exhibit in a barnyard. If an angel from the highest heaven comes down among them, pitying their forlorn estate, they eye him with a magnificently distant stare, keeping him at arm's length by politeness the most freezing, unless he be properly introduced, when at once they become graciously condescending. There is more joy in heaven over the repentance of one such sinner than over almost any other, for long experience has shown that they are the most difficult of all to convert; but, when once thoroughly converted, their utter disgust and loathing of their former selves are strange in their intensity. One such spirit, my Swedenborgian friend, when "intromitted into the superior state,"

saw tearing into the smallest tatters his ragged finery, for fear that the tiniest piece might be appropriated by some still infatuated soul. Nor was he content until he had pulled down his mud palace to the very ground, and stamped it into dust beneath his heel. Do you think that my Swedenborgian friend was merely dreaming? I tell you that I have seen several persons who at this very moment are in this very hell. I have been into their houses, admired their finery, have been annihilated by their stare or made blissful by their condescension.

Well, it is just this sort of hell that I want to make loathsome to all true Americans.

I find that a common mechanic can tell me more than I know myself about the writings of Swedenborg. I know more than one shoemaker who goes to college. Why not? He is a man, and ideas were meant for men. A friend tells me that about the most refined man he knows is a tailor. Why not? I suppose a tailor is a man. The fact is, in America a certain privileged class has no longer the monopoly of thought and culture. I was early and happily made aware of the great idea that underlies the greatness of America. I had been but a short time in this country, when it was my good fortune to meet, in an obscure village at the extremity of Long Island, two of the sweetest, best educated, most refined, most thoughtful ladies God ever made. It was a new thing to me then — I have got more used to it since — to dine in the kitchen, to see them lay the cloth and set the plates for dinner, peel the potatoes, and take the meat out of the oven with their own hands, and then

sit down to table and hold high discourse on literature, science, art, and religion. I have never heard more discriminating criticism on literature, more feeling appreciation of poetry, more noble and progressive ideas of religion, than I heard over that humble table in that little farm-house. But why not? Why not find the same thing everywhere? A man is a man, a woman is a woman, here; and what is to hinder them from cultivating themselves to the limit of their capacity, filling up the God-given measure of their manhood and their womanhood?

2. The second social danger is the mean desire to level down. This seems to be the danger which Renan and De Tocqueville fear for us most. If they are right, if, in fact, we succeed in producing a vast aggregate of prosperity, but no kingly and queenly natures to dignify, lead, and elevate the thoughts and lives of the masses,—no glorious units to be the significant figures of the millions,—we would say at once: “Blame us. Blame our mean jealousy of noble souls. Blame our want of faith in the God that sends kingly natures to all nations that yearn after high things, to be their guides to the land of promise. Do not blame the American Idea which we thus put to shame.”

Remembering, however, that this very thing was, perhaps, the main curse and ruin of Athens, it becomes us not to be high-minded, but to fear. Let us ever remember Lowell’s high definition of democracy: “Not, I am as good as you, but, You are as good as I.” Nay, we may even go as far as the Irishman who enthusiastically assented to the Chartist orator who cried out, “Friends, tell me, is not one man as

good as another?" "Faith, he is," said the Irishman, "and a deal better, too!" We keep out of this second and even meaner hell by rejoicing in all high excellence, by thanking God when genuine excellence in any department of life or thought appears in our midst. My invaluable Swedenborgian friend, out of his wonderful experience, has kindly furnished me with the companion picture to his "Refusal to level up," which I will venture to call "The Apotheosis of Levelling Down." In it he tells just what I want to tell. Said he:—

I dreamed that I was conducted by a strong-winged angel through the various human heavens which float around our planet, and came at last to a society that dwelt in a walled city, over the gates of which was written, "This is the heaven of heavens." I was somewhat surprised on entering the gate to perceive that on each side of the broad street, as far as eye could reach, the houses, which were of medium size, were all exactly alike. Every one of them had the same front, the same gate, the same number of windows. They were built of the same stone, and, as I afterwards found out, when going in, had exactly the same internal arrangements from hall to roof, with the same sort of furniture in the rooms. When I was fairly inside the gate, I was greeted by a large number of men and women, the inhabitants, who cordially welcomed me, and congratulated me on my entrance. I turned my head away for a moment from the one who seemed to be the spokesman for the whole; and, on looking back, I found myself entirely at a loss to tell who it was that had spoken, as, to my surprise, I discovered that all the men were alike, and likewise all the women. Each man's dress, size, body, face, features, were facsimiles of every other man's; and the dress of the ladies, which was very becoming, was repeated to every iota, to the very color of the ribbons and the very tie of the bow. Their faces were as similar as the men's were. All had brown hair, all were of medium height, all had regular features, neither too full nor too thin. Everything, even to the hand, to the very finger-tips, was



alike. Seeing the confusion with which this novel sight evidently filled me, the spokesman, to relieve my perplexity, stepped forth to my side, that I might be able to identify him by his standing apart from the rest.

"I perceive," said he, "that you have but lately come from the earth. In your surprise at what you behold, I perceive a desire to be informed concerning the laws and principles of this society.

"In our earth life we could not but perceive with pain the various inequalities in society. We perceived that this injustice went down to the very roots of human life. We saw that by the laws of hereditary descent men were actually born unjustly. Why should there be such tremendous inequalities of natural talent? Why should even physical beauty and strength be so unequally distributed? If it is good to have regular features, why should not all have them? Why should one be clumsy, and another graceful? one be uncomfortably tall, another uncomfortably short? In a word, we felt that all these painful contrasts were unnatural; and, while in the earth life, we did what we could to lessen them. But, upon arriving into this sphere, we formed a society, which is daily increased by new-comers from the earth, and which sets itself to alter these unnatural conditions. By careful study of the Laws of Nature, we arrived at the conclusion that there is one archetypal form of man, and another of woman, from the most palpable physical characteristics to innermost spiritual qualities. There is some dim perception of this magnificent truth even upon earth. Take, for a common instance, the nose. Does not a certain sense of incongruity strike immediately the most unobservant, when he perceives a human being with a nose either much too long or much too short? Is it not evident from this that there is, in the minds of all, a dim perception that the nose should have a certain definite proportion to the rest of the features? Is not this equally true of the mouth, of the chin, of the forehead, of the ears, and of every feature in detail? What human being desires to have long ears, a bud of a nose, a yawning aperture of a mouth, a receding monkey-like forehead, a double chin or no chin at all? Then, as to the other limbs, is it not ridiculous to see a stout body set on short legs, which probably will have a

bow in them, or flamingo-like legs, surmounted with a small bunch of a body? Then, who does not know that large feet are not so becoming as smaller ones? What is the conclusion? It is that there is a best possible size and shape for the human body as a whole, and for each limb and feature in particular, the type of woman differing from that of man; though some earth reformers, for whom in other respects we have great sympathy, as fellow-workers with ourselves, seem to doubt this, owing to their incomplete understanding of human physiology."

"This, then, we discovered, and forthwith set to work to make our idea a fact. The stubborn materials of an earthly body cannot be sufficiently altered in a single generation, though much may be done; and wonders may be accomplished by resolute adherence to our principles, which we are endeavoring to make known, if continued through several generations. But this ethereal body which we possess is vastly more plastic to the efforts of the will, and, though it cost us each at first some struggles to attain to the typical form, several objecting to the surrender of what they considered some natural superiority that they fancied themselves possessed of, yet the final result is what you see; and, indeed, we find that the founding of the society was the most difficult thing, as each new-comer now unconsciously becomes the exact facsimile of the rest in a very short time, as the personality, so to speak, of the society has now a most overmastering influence. It were too long a task to tell you of all the happy results we achieve. Behold one at least. Can you look at any one of these ladies, and even imagine that one is envious of the other? Why should she be? Are not all exactly alike? Envy is killed by taking away all possible reason for it."

I looked round amid the bewildering uniformity of beauty; and, as each among the countless fair ones smiled exactly the same smile at me from exactly the same countenance, it produced the effect of gazing at a single beautiful woman reflected in a thousand mirrors. It were as absurd to suppose them envious of each other as it would be to imagine them envious of themselves.

"Once, again, all married jealousy is done away with; for what fault is it possible for a wife to find with a husband, when she knows that he is a typical man, precisely similar to all the other men she sees? and how can a husband institute unfavorable com-

parisons between the appearance and character of his own wife and other men's wives, when their qualities are exactly the same, and all are equally perfect? It would be tedious to show in every detail how we arrived at each result. Suffice it to say that in all cases where there was no precise indication the law of average governed us. We mediated in the color of the hair, between black and light, and therefore concluded that brown was the typical color of hair. Similarly with regard to the size and weight of the human body and the various limbs thereof, we struck the just mean in all cases."

"But to proceed. You perceive that all the houses are exactly alike. Of course, the advantage of the absence of envy is as palpable in this as in the human body itself. By a process of reasoning which you may not fully understand, we concluded that the size of the house should be exactly proportioned to the size of the inmates. For instance, to make a coarse approximation, the windows should not be too high above the floor of the apartment for the wife, the smaller in stature, to open them. The door should not be too low for the taller, the husband, to pass through; and so on through each detail."

"But now let us proceed to the mental qualities, where we have generally found the greatest difficulty. If any one had any special mental gift, as he called it, whether of musical or poetic talent, or of painting or sculpture, mathematics or physical science, history or philosophy, he was generally pretty sure to have a great struggle before he could bring himself to give these up. But when it was conclusively proved to him that such so-called superiorities were in reality the result of disease, that they prevented the beautiful harmony of the whole man, inasmuch as they robbed all the other faculties of their proper nutriment in order to exalt some one or two above their normal position, his reason became convinced, and he gave way. And soon he found how delightful it was to be envied no more for his superiority, and perceived that he was now at rest, being no longer goaded by an ambitious craving for added excellence in that particular direction; and then he acquiesced altogether, and became one in heart and soul with us, becoming in fact unusually earnest to persuade new-comers, who had gifts similar to his own, to resign them altogether, as he had done."

"But I weary you unnecessarily. Take up your abode with us. You are free to stay, and you are equally free to depart. There is no compulsion used here: here affinity alone is sufficient to bind us together."

So it seemed in my dream as if I abode with them a long while, feeling at first as if I had reached the heaven of rest, that here envy and ambition and jealousy and carking care were done away with forever, that here all was peace and harmony. Day after day I went to the same kind of entertainments, in the same kind of houses, enjoyed the same kind of conversation, with precisely the same kind of people, heard the same kind of music, and sat down to the same kind of table, in the same kind of house, with the same kind of host and hostess. Such perfection was deeply soothing after the restless seeking of the earth life.

But, as time wore on, an unaccountable lassitude and weariness seized me from time to time, first appearing at long intervals, then more frequently, till at last the sad truth began to dawn upon me that, if this was indeed the heaven of heavens, I was unfit for such a dwelling-place. A yawn of inexpressible weariness stifled, as soon as it came, persisted in returning, till at last it conquered. I determined to depart.

So one day I slunk to the gate unobserved, found it open, and soon was outside the walls. Outside, as if actually waiting for me, I saw my conductor, who seemed not at all surprised at seeing me. Nay, if such a thing were possible, I thought that I could detect a sort of angelic smile around his mouth, when I said wofully, looking up once more at the inscription above the gate: "Is this indeed the heaven of heavens? Alas! I fear I must acknowledge that it is no place for me. I am not good enough." "That inscription," he answered, "simply appears as the thought of the inhabitants concerning themselves. They may quite possibly be mistaken."—"Then do all who enter remain?"—"Oh, no! there are constant desertions, as each becomes weary of his fantasy. Of course, such a one is looked upon as an apostate; but, nevertheless, one after another slinks away as you did, as the yearning for the real heavens of God grows too strong to be put by any longer." And, as he spoke, I gazed at his face, which seemed now to shine as the face of an angel when he gazes on the throne of God; and, as I looked into his calm, deep

eyes, I seemed to see mirrored therein a great white throne, the steps of which mounted upward into infinity. Rank above rank of angel hosts appeared, each marked with diviner beauty and more majestic mien, each more excellent in strength, as they ascended

“Higher and higher still,  
Yet loftier statures fill  
The jasper courts of the everlasting dwelling.”

And yet each seemed to beam love upon each: the higher beckoned to the lower to come up toward them, while the lower looked up with reverent love toward the higher. And so that marvellous ladder of created intelligences mounted up to God.

But, while I gazed, the angel spake. “Mortal,” said he, “look upward to the stars. Behold, how one star differeth from another star in glory: each is equally free to shine with all its strength in the heavens of God; and yet God has given different glory to each, and yet each envies not the other, but each rejoices in the other’s shining. So in the thought of God do all created intelligences rejoice in the other’s beauty. Not, as in yon foolish city, is envy removed from heaven by paring down the gifts and excellences of each to one dull level of uniformity, not there is selfishness silenced by pandering to its contemptible appetite, by cutting down the tall trees of the forest to the level of the brush,—no! but by that one love which reigns in the heart of each. The humblest angel in God’s heaven blesses the Father of all for the glory that he has revealed in the faces of his strong ones, and by loving reverence for that glory is himself changed unaware into the likeness of that glory. That is the glorious liberty of the sons of God, not where all are reduced to dreary sameness and monotony, but where each is free to expand to the full circle of the possibilities which God has implanted in his nature. Farewell!” “and parted heavenward on the wing.”

My friend certainly dreams to some purpose. I add not one word.

III. The first century of our Republic reveals much that is full of fine promise, something of noble

performance, much that is still lacking to a complete national consciousness. It contains, too, matter for grave foreboding, almost for dread. It shows us there is no royal road to greatness, that the mere fact that we are a republic will not save us from the one-sidedness which is the consequence of half-culture, from the littleness which is the sure result of low aims, or from the swift retribution which follows wrong. It shows us that the stern laws of the universe are around us also, and that, in a republic as well as in a monarchy, greatness comes by law, and not by luck; that honor is the reward of reality, not of make-believe; that high dignities are gained not by self-seeking, but by self-sacrifice. The giddy height on which we stand is enough to make thoughtful men ponder, and religious men fall on their knees to ask for strength equal to this tremendous day of the Lord, the issue of which is to place either the fool's cap of the charlatan or the diadem of victory on the brow of our Republic.

One thing, I think, is evident. We shall not be content with mediocrity. We shall either be greatly noble or greatly base. Yet it is to be confessed that many, even of our most thoughtful well-wishers in Europe, think that the reverse is to be the case, and that we are to present in the future a fine specimen of amiable mediocrity, an immense mass of average well-being, a hundred million of well-to-do, comfortably housed, well-fed, good-humored people,—not too much burdened with ideas and not much troubled in our digestion with longings after the unattainable Perfect. They do not expect that great artists, deep thinkers, inspired prophets and poets, are to be born

and graciously nurtured here; but they do look forward to low poor rates and wages at two dollars a day. They do not anticipate any high stimulus, any grand impulse toward the Ideal, to emanate from America; but they feel reasonably sure of capital crops of corn and cotton, pigs and cheese.

Now, I think that we would all repudiate indignantly this degrading conception, whether it came from friend or foe,—repudiate it, if not for ourselves and our own performance, at least for the grand idea of democracy which we are supposed to represent. We would all cry out: “We may be as mediocre, as commonplace, as you please; but, if we are, blame us, and our unworthy, contemptible conception of the American Idea. Do not blame that Idea itself, for that is God’s angel of hope and promise for the after-days.”

Is the American Idea really going to dwarf men, simply because it exalts manhood alone? Does the absence of arbitrary class distinctions—that is, distinctions founded on conventional, not real superiorities—necessarily belittle? Let us see. The old idea of a calling was the position into which a man was born. “To do my duty in that station of life into which it has pleased God to call me” used to mean, Be content with the position into which you were born, whether that be a palace or a gutter, but especially the gutter! That is to say, the external surroundings of a man, not the soul within him, were to legislate for all his future. But in our America God’s verdict is not looked for outside,—is not supposed to be told by fustian jacket or broadcloth, by

plaster walls or marble,—but within, by brain-texture, nerve-power, mind-power, heart-power, spirit-power. Whatever a man can be, that is he bound to be. “Capacity is the limit of sphere.” As the children of Israel were taught to expect that God would inspire whom he willed among the people, lofty or lowly, and more generally lowly than lofty,—to believe that to the herdsman as well as the prince, to the ploughman as well as the priest, the word of the Lord, quick and powerful, might come,—so the American Idea teaches us that princes may come out of hovels, and that the leaders of America to-morrow may be the wagon-boys or rail-splitters or shoe-makers of to-day.

Does, then, the American Idea bar the road to great achievements simply because it opens wide the gates that lead to that road, and bids millions enter where a handful entered before? If a million heads are opened to the thoughts of science or art, is there less chance of high excellence being developed in some of these millions than if a hundred minds are thus developed?

“The French Revolution,” says Napoleon, “proclaimed to all the world that at last a career was open to talent.” How far will America allow a man to progress? ask you. Just as far as he can. She writes upon her portals, “The career is open to talent.” Just what a man can do, that shall he be free to do. All walks of literature, all researches of science, all distinction of orator, of statesman, of merchant, of poet, shall be his if his hand is strong enough to grasp them. “Through all the roads of



heaven," says Plato, "the chariots of the blessed gods roll free; and whosoever hath the power and the will hath free right to follow whatsoever chariot of whatsoever god he pleases. For envy," he adds, "has no place in the feasts of the gods."

But, lastly, I look forward to all manner of grand achievements for America, because I perceive that high thought in all departments is democratic.

Certainly, Science is democratic. Science does not ask what the color of a man's coat or his skin is before she will deign to accept him as a votary. She examines not his cuticle; but his calculations,—not his ancestors, but himself. Again, the imagination is democratic. Let two men write a poem, one an Ayrshire ploughman, the other a king, if you will, and the imagination crowns the ploughman with its laurel, if the ploughman's verse touches the deeper chord in the heart of man. Royal authors have had, in general, a very disloyal public; and for this reason, the imagination is democratic. It refuses to admire that which is not admirable, to be touched by that which is not touching. Is any one foolish enough to suppose that, if a poor man or a black man wrote a noble poem, the imagination would refuse him the tribute of tears and sympathy, because he was black or poor?

Does, then, the true democratic idea lower the imagination, make it coarse and commonplace? Does it refuse to any man the right to have grand, glorious thoughts because the thoughts of the average run of people are the reverse of grand and glorious? No! All it says is: The career is open to talent. Beau-

tiful thoughts to the brains that can think them, whether the face be red, black, brown, or white. Thankful recognition, gratitude to all givers of beautiful thoughts, regardless of all things else save the beauty of the thoughts.

Last of all, above all other departments of human genius, religion is democratic. This has been written in letters of light on human history ever since Moses inaugurated his grand theocratic democracy, and took his stand not upon one inspired man or one inspired class, but upon an inspired people, each individual of whom was to keep himself ready for the heavenly call.

Does, then, democracy in religion mean that we are to have no prophet more,—that henceforth the heavens are to be closed to the piercing eye of genius, because it is not fair to the generality of people that they should be blind as bats to the everlasting glory, while others understand the secrets the heavens are forever telling?

Oh, no! Democracy in religion means that the heavens are ever open to the sons of men, that the thoughts of God are near to every man's head, that not one soul shall be defrauded of its just right to be put into communication with the great thoughts of the wise of old, that no soul that can climb the hills of God shall be kept down because its body's skin is black or brown or red, or its food is coarse, or its birth humble.

My friends, democracy can never alter the great law of divine communication, which is "thought kindling itself at the fire of living thought." But what it can do is this: It can give all men education enough to

come within range of divine thoughts. It will develop nobler genius, because it will give a million a chance to develop it where a handful only had the chance before.

Stern, yet simple, is the law of divine inspiration. "Thou hast asked a hard thing," says Elijah to Elisha, when he had asked that a double portion of his spirit should descend upon him. "Nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken up, it shall be to thee even as thou hast said. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire descended and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof! And he saw him no more; and he took hold of his own clothes and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back and stood by the bank of Jordan. And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the water, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? And, when he had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither; and Elisha went over. And, when the sons of the prophets looked upon his face, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha!"

These things are an allegory. He that can follow religious genius in its upward flight towards the heavens, and with undazzled yet kindling eye behold it mount the chariot of fire, even till the uncreated glory shines forth upon it and the finite soul and the Infinite become one light,—upon him a double por-

tion of the spirit of genius descends. He, too, can take up the prophet's mantle, and with it smite the waters that separate the common, sordid world from the world of eternal principles.

This, then, is the divine right which democracy has to secure,—not to one, but to all souls,—opportunity to be kindled into flame by hearing and studying the divine words of souls that glow with the fire of God, and a free right to believe that the vision of the Eternal is no private property, but belongs to man as man.

I look for a grand development of religious genius in America during the next hundred years. When the land shall number 100,000,000 of freemen, all educated to the consciousness of mind, why, how poor must human nature be if under such mighty influences, unchecked, unbarred, it cannot show that religious genius grows in free soil like the flowers, each after its kind? Democracy in religion tend to dull uniformity? Not while the world bends before the immortal life of the Carpenter of Nazareth!

The world has grown weary of the pyramid style in national architecture, where millions of living souls are walled up in utter night, used only to form the hidden support to the polished ascending slabs of gentleman, lord, marquis, duke, prince, and princess, which adorn the sides and cover up all the solid masses below, which alone make their position possible; while on the apex a single crowned statue stands, with rayless darkness beneath its feet. The world has grown weary of that, and begins to long for the grand Christian-cathedral style of national architect-

ure, where no single stone is despised or bereft of its dower of glory and beauty, where arch and pillar, groined roof, and deep-stained window, massive buttress and slender pinnacle, are alike shaped to forms of grace and nobleness,—ay, where every niche of this living temple of souls is consecrated to noble service; where every pillar is entwined with tender tracery, every rafter of the ceiling is carved with an artist's hands; where the arched gateways are adorned with many a statue of angel or of hero-saint, and where the solemn twilight of the crypts below is dedicated to the monumental resting-places of the mighty dead; where wall and tower and battlement without fill the landscape with hope and beauty and dignity, while within all is glorious with the light that streams through mighty pictured windows; where every stone vibrates to the solemn music that echoes along its vast expanse, and where over its high altar the lowly born King of men is seen ascending to God, bearing man's nature with him. Such a national cathedral,—each stone a living soul, each dedicated to use and beauty, each in its appropriate place, each supporting each, each necessary to the other and the whole, each an integral part of the glory of the whole,—that whole forming a grand national church of the Living God, dedicated to his praise and to the service of man,—such a human cathedral, its floor a continent and its arching roof the sky, it is our task to rear. In God's name, let us arise and build.

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## THE FEASIBILITY OF SINLESSNESS.

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“Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”—  
MATT. v. 48.

I SUPPOSE that the great difficulty which many, who are unable to believe that Jesus of Nazareth belonged to any category of being other than that of humanity, find in admitting that then he could have been sinless; and, on the other hand, which the great majority of Christians, who believe him to have been sinless, find in admitting that then he could have been a man, arises from the same source,—namely, the intimate association in every mind of the fact of sinfulness with the character of human nature.

The one party, being unable to admit a supernatural theory of his nature, and therefore believing Jesus to have been strictly a man, argue that, being a man, he could not have escaped sin. The others, having imbibed a faith in his perfection of character and life, argue (on precisely the same ground) that therefore he could not have been merely a man.

And either course of reasoning brings up, therefore, the same question; namely, Is sin an essential in the character of human nature? That is, is it contrary to the nature of humanity, and therefore impossible to be conceived, that a man should live and escape sin? Or is sin only a thing to which man is



*liable?* That is, is it not merely an incident of human experience?

The almost universality of the fact we all admit. Solomon's confession expresses our general conviction, "There is no man that sinneth not."

And yet this is, perhaps, a hasty and sweeping judgment, and it may not be true to the best facts of human life.

But observe clearly this point. It is not the facts of human history to which, logically, we appeal to decide the question, but the traits of human nature. One question is, not what men have been, but what men may be. From history and observation we get ideas of the absolute characteristics of manhood; and it is from the nature of these traits that we must infer the possibility of their assuming any supposed relation to each other or to a fixed standard.

We need, at starting, further to discriminate what sin is. There is often much confusion in our minds about this.

Observe, then, first, that sin is a *voluntary* state. That is to say, it is a state of the mind over which we have a potential or conceivable control. Whatever is beyond our power is beyond our responsibility, and does not affect our moral character. Hence, if there were such a thing as "original sin," we might affirm paradoxically that then it were not sin. If God has given us a twist toward evil, then, in proportion as we are so inclined, we are not sinful. It is no shame to a bat that he cannot see in the daytime. Natural bad traits certainly lower their possessor in the scale of being, but they do not imply in him that hostile and

alienated state of the dispositions in which sin consists. Cannibalism could hardly subsist in a high state of civilization, yet it might be practised in entire innocence of sin.

On the other hand, when we are speaking accurately, sin is to be distinguished from guilt. Sin is, properly, not a characteristic of our actions, but a state of our minds. It is not in what we do, it is what we feel. Even in our thoughts there is a nice distinction between guiltiness and sinfulness. It is guilty to imagine wicked deeds, as Jesus says of adulterous thoughts that they contain the same moral elements as the acts in which they would issue. But sinfulness is that general state of the mind which permits guilty thoughts to arise. It is that moral torpor and perversity which most of us feel; that indescribable repugnance to our own ideals; that indifference to holiness and unwillingness to combat temptations which go along with us, making our conduct erratic and unworthy, and casting a chill and shadow over our lives. Of course, it includes indifference to progress; that is, a willingness not to receive higher light which on any hand might be enjoyed.

Now, then, our question is, Is such a state of soul *essential* in the character of manhood? Would he cease to be a man who should escape it? Would he be, necessarily, other than man who should be born free from it?

Or is it only *incidental* to our moral *career*? That is, is it merely a state of soul which the character or theory of our career renders it highly probable should

exist, often or generally, at certain stages of that career?

To determine this, it is plain that we must examine also what *we* are. What is man? The idea which is, and has always been, more or less clearly, entertained among men, is that man is a developing spirit. Jesus very clearly indicates this as his view. It corresponds with our native instincts.

At least, all would admit that man is an *imperfect* spiritual being. The Calvinistic picture (as found still standing in the popular creeds, though tacitly rejected by the popular faith) makes man a demon, wholly inclined to evil, incapable of good; nay, even his good, bad; so that his very longings and prayers for holiness are an offence to God. But everybody knows better than this. We know that men are indifferent, sluggish, perverse, easily led away, careless of spiritual growth, some of them downright bad; but we know that what good there is in them is good and nothing other.

And so, I say, we regard man as imperfect; that is, as not having attained his ideals. This is what we deduce from the history of mankind, and from their present condition. Not a fact can be brought forward which properly indicates that diabolism of soul which the crude and disheartening, the almost wicked, theory of "total depravity" implies. Indeed, I think I am prepared to maintain that there are no facts to show anything essentially evil in man. I mean any disposition to love evil because it is evil. It is Satan only who could be imagined saying, in Milton's words, "Evil, be thou my good!" Eve and Adam

yielded to temptation; they did not manifest a positive preference of the bad, as such. To men all, the moment of yielding to temptation is commonly a moment either of delusion or else of overmastering passion.

This is not to say that individuals have not become diabolic in their wickedness. Perhaps they have. Such depravation of the moral nature is perhaps conceivable, and must perhaps be admitted as possible to free moral agents. I only claim that what we know of our race, generically, shows that man is characteristically a moral being in a stage of imperfect development.

Now, then, what principle of culture is appropriate to the development of the moral nature? In other words, how can a spiritual being be developed? I might say, How can any faculty or function, physical or spiritual, moral or practical, be developed?

We find by observation and by reasoning that there is only one way. And that is by use, by practice and exercise of the function or faculty. This stands to reason, and is observed in fact.

But see what this implies. In the case of the moral nature it implies *temptation*. That is to say, since the morality of conduct depends on choice, the exercise of the moral nature consists in choice. Mark this clearly; the exercise of the moral nature consists in *choice*. But choice demands the opportunity of choosing. Hence, for the purposes of our moral education, we need both such objects of desire as serve to demand of us a genuine choice, and even such appetites and passions in ourselves as give to

that side of the question a real hearing; that is, such as make the choice a real one.

In other words, we need to be *tempted*,— not merely in form, but in genuine fact. We need to be solicited to evil on the one hand, as well as to be impelled to good on the other. The seductions of the flesh and of the world; the appetite for riches, for position, for display, for fame,— all the passions,— need to have a real force, so as to test severely the contrary principles of spiritual aspiration, moral rectitude, and unselfish benevolence.

In other words still, a spiritual being, possessing inherent moral faculty, cannot be conceived except as liable to be tempted. For he could hardly know the excellence of virtue unless it were sometimes contrasted in his own soul with evil; and he could never really exercise his moral faculties unless he had occasions of testing them against real opposition. Therefore, liability to temptation is an essential condition of our spiritual history.

But, observe,— liability to be tempted is not the same thing as liability to fall. To be tempted is one thing, to yield is another; and, when we have discerned that human nature must inevitably be solicited to evil, we have still *not* discerned that it must inevitably fall. Then we may admit temptation to be an essential of our experience, but not necessarily admit sin to be an essential of our character.

For what is it in temptation that subserves the purposes of moral development? Simply this,— is it not?—the bringing us face to face with evil and causing us to put forth our strength to resist it. We

need a real contest with evil. We need to turn its solicitations over and over in our minds, so that our choice of the good shall be a real, deep, and heroic victory.

But, mark me, *we do not need to fall*. I know that even guilt often becomes to us the instrument of illumination, and our sin, when we have risen from it, the basis of virtue. And yet I see nothing in our nature which goes to show that, in any case, it would be better for us that we should have yielded to rather than have resisted temptation. Sin may, when overcome through repentance, be made the means of grace to us, thank God. But if, at the moment when we were tested in temptation, we had manfully resisted it, we should already then have been where guilt and repentance, two long steps, have had to bring us. The yielding is always a negative means of grace, at best. It simply removes the illusion of temptation. It makes us see the hatefulness of sin, but it does not give any added strength to virtue. It may arouse us, through shame and remorse, passionately to renew the battle; but only victory gives positive increase of moral power. Till you have fought and won, you cannot be sure you are able to vanquish your antagonist. When once the foe is prostrate at your feet, you get a direct and positive accession of moral force, in the confidence you now feel in yourself.

We may even go further. Yielding to temptation, so far from ever increasing moral force, always diminishes it. The oftener you are overcome by temptation, the weaker you feel for it. And the longer your will remains in the morbid, paralyzed condition of

sinfulness, the more accustomed it becomes to that condition, and the less ready it is to act for virtue and holiness. Remember that the spiritual nature of man is a vital being, that its laws are as natural and imperious as those of the physique. To leave any of its faculties or functions in an inactive or morbid condition is just as if you should bandage your arm or your eye or neglect any bodily disease. Suppose you come to hate and loathe your sin. Still, your faculties are so accustomed to it that, at first, and for long, they work uneasily upon the side of goodness. There is a continual tendency to slip back into the familiar ways of evil; while every attempt in the better way is novel, and demands a special effort of the will. Let a man be miserly all his life, and by and by begin to despise himself and resolve to be generous, and he will give the unusual penny to a beggar with an awkward air.

Therefore, virtue is always better than sinfulness, victory than defeat; because, although the contest is what serves to exercise the faculty, yet it is victory that gives confidence to the mind, and the practice of virtue that shapes the faculties in the mould of virtue. Even though sin reveal truth to us, and wake us up to its own hatefulness, still this victory is always to be won, this habit to be acquired.

I regard it, then, as certain that, although almost universal, sin is not in its nature inevitable. That is, although an almost certain incident of our experience, it is not an essential in our character as human beings. Tempted, it is necessary we should be. Sin, it would be better if we did not.

And now let us look at the practical question from another point of view.

Is it possible to believe that any human being ever actually escaped sin? For example, can we, supposing we believe that any historical person lived sinless, suppose that he was a man? Or, conversely, can we, if we suppose him to have been a man, believe that he was sinless?

I have granted the improbability of actual sinlessness here on earth, but I cannot admit its impossibility. I never expect to realize it in myself; and yet I see nothing in the nature of the case which prevents our each and all living blameless in act, and in perfect loyalty of sentiment and thought to God and to our ideals. What makes me hate my sin, and despise myself for it, is precisely that I feel I ought to overcome it. But one cannot feel that he ought to do anything which he has not the power to do.

Now, the reason you and I go about dragging this lengthening chain with us is — just what? Why do we consent to live hampered and degraded by evil, when we might live joyous and free in sinless peace?

Simply because, as individuals, we lack the force or the sight. Our faculties are too little developed or are ill-balanced. It is of the nature of an imperfect thing that its parts should be so. But why should it seem incredible to us that men should be born with or attain to such moral perception and force, such an equilibrium of the faculties and development of them, as should protect them or rescue them from this trying experience? It is not, remember, that they should be born inaccessible to the seductions of evil,



but that they should be, or become, capable of resisting evil, through the perception of its real character and of the beauty and excellence of virtue. To relieve them from the possibility of temptation would be to dehumanize them; but that expansion and balance of the faculties which should enable them to meet it, and to keep themselves in a state of sympathy with holiness, and with God, its personal realization, would depend on, and consist in, the development of the genuine characteristics of manhood simply.

In short, perfectibility is an attribute of an imperfect being, as logically as the actual limitation of attainment which the term imperfection implies. He is no more an imperfect being who cannot become perfect than he who has become so. If Calvinism, for example, be true, man is perfect now. If he be by nature so bad as that scheme has represented him, and cannot improve, then he has reached the limit of his capacities, and has attained his ideal.

But, if man is essentially perfectible, why should not some attain perfection? I mean, of course, by perfection, not the absolute idea of the complete expansion of all faculties up to their infinite degrees (which in one sense can never be attained by man, and which is Deity), but that practical state of equilibrium, of entire truth to self, of complete devotion to the good, and unqualified rejection of the evil, implied in the word "perfect" as used by Jesus, in the text and elsewhere, and by many other writers, both in the Old and New Testaments, and which we sometimes describe as "perfection on the plane of

manhood." This is what Jesus calls us to, in our text,—that as God is perfect in his sphere, so we should be in ours. And this, it seems to me, is entirely conceivable; and if it be, unhappily, not probable in us as individuals, we must certainly admit its entire possibility.

And, my friends, despite all the evil of the world, there seems to me enough to encourage it as a hope. Without recurring now to the illustrious character to which the subject naturally turns our thoughts (for I have wished to discuss it on general grounds), I see on many sides facts that abundantly encourage it. As I stand by the bedside of death or distress, and see how calmly the one is always met and how patiently the other is almost always endured; as I see a crippled form through which the wrenches and twinges of pain course momentarily, without assuagement or intermission, and yet without extorting a word of complaint; as I see a tender mother, her little brood swept away at a breath, till her heart wrings in agony, still able to say, "Thy will be done"; as I read of the heroism of battlefields, when pure devotion has led men into those God-defying horrors; as I see brave hearts daring pestilence to carry succor; as I find, always and as a characteristic fact, that the advent of real trial develops unknown strength, my heart rises to a confidence in the glorious capacities of manhood which can admit *any* possibility of achievement. Yes, and who of you has not known, as life wound its way among men, those saintly souls in whom this completeness of attainment seemed to you almost visibly realized,—coming so near to this

complete purification and balancing of the mind that at least your, perhaps sin-clouded, vision could not detect wherein it had not been attained? Alas for life if there were not such! These holy ones that shine out in the firmament of history and life, stars of first magnitude, with their tender but searching rays; bringing God near to us by their faith and their communion with him, and holding out to us at once rebuke and hope! No doubt, in their every bosom is that same consciousness of higher heights still which made Jesus say, "Call me not good, there is but one good, that is God"; and yet, perhaps, no conscious lack of fidelity to those ideals, no conscious inclination to swerve from the straight and narrow pathways that lead us thither.





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A SERIES OF SERMONS

BY

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THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

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MAN FIRST, THEN GOD

BY

THOMAS R. SLICER

Minister of the Church of our Father, Buffalo, N.Y.

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## MAN FIRST, THEN GOD.

“And of which of you that is a father shall his son ask bread, and he give him a stone? Or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent? Or, if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”—  
LUKE xi. 11-13.

IF we would discover the ground of strength in any life, we must seek to know the terms in which the universe is interpreted by that life. Some such effort to interpret the universe more or less completely there will be found if the life we interview be genuinely strong. Weak natures are content to drift from point to point close in-shore; but those who are strong, trusting some chart that has been verified, or steering by some proved compass or by the heavens, venture out upon the deep: intent are they upon discovering new realms lying beyond the accustomed track of the timid. These are they who inherit the blessing which Jesus announced, saying to the disciple who insisted upon arguing from the wounds of the dead Christ the presence of the living Lord: “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.”

These souls who “endure as seeing him who is invisible,”—that feel the power of the eternal while they “look at the things not seen,”—these have some philosophy of life which sustains them. To them it is



true that "the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord shall stand forever." To those who behold these triumphant and steady souls it becomes of the deepest importance to hear them tell the secret of their strength. They are plied with the question, "Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth." When we discover the secret it will be found to be so simple as to excite our wonder, so simple that we count it out of all proportion to the mystery it explains.

Such a statement of the universe lies before us in this text. Here is Jesus of Nazareth announcing how appears to him that eternal bounty which feeds the world. The process of his thought is as simple as the procession of his own quiet days had been. The solution is as unaffected as the humble life at Nazareth. Here, as ever, with a wisdom we cannot overestimate, he builds upon the foundation of common life the structure of celestial grace and beauty. See how simply it is stated: "And of which of you that is a father shall his son ask bread, and he give him a stone? Or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent? Or, if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

We may count ourselves happy in holding allegiance as disciples to a Master of so transparent a method in the philosophy of life. It is also a matter upon which we may congratulate ourselves as Christians, that no philosophic insight nor scientific inquiry has yet devised a method which more completely meets the needs of human life than this simple statement of the terms

on which we may believe that at the root of all things is the eternal goodness, that a heart of love is the heart of the universe. This argument of Jesus from domestic life we can all understand; we do well to believe it also unless we can substitute for it a scheme of thought, an interpretation of the moral order of the world which will produce better results.

Note, then, the terms in which this simple argument is concluded. Its premises are self-evident, "Of which of you that is a father, if his son shall ask bread."

Now, it is not said, which of you that hath children. It is not the physical fact, but the moral relationship, that is emphasized,—that moral relationship which made it seem safe to give the Jewish father the power of life and death in the case of his child, and that moral relationship which pointed to the degenerate fact of "the corban" as a sign that the times were sadly out of joint. Jesus presupposes the normal, moral state implied by the terms, "one of you that is a father." That this is not used by him in the sense of mere kinship is demonstrated by the habit of Hebrew thought, as, for instance, where Jehovah is represented as saying, although their creator, the author of their being confessedly already, yet as establishing a wholly new relationship,—he declares, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Also in Rev. xxi. 7, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." It is because we forget that to Jesus of Nazareth all human relationships are significant only on their spiritual side, that we

are troubled in understanding his words about these relationships. The sanctity of marriage, not its legality, is in his mind; the brotherhood and sisterhood that lies in spiritual sympathy impresses him more than ties of blood. "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Whosoever doeth the will of my Father."

Even in that early tradition of finding him in the temple there is the same thought conveyed: "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. Wherefore did ye seek me? It was certain where I would be,—in my Father's house, about my Father's business."

And it is also because of the failure to keep well before the mind the significance of this term on its spiritual side that we lose the meaning of those other terms, so distorted by a false exegesis and a too literal theology,—terms in which Jesus is spoken of as the Son of God, and God is called "the Father of Jesus," "the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; as also where it is declared, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life," etc. The key to New Testament theology is lost if we misunderstand these terms.

When estimated by their true value these terms give a dignity to the relationships we call common which makes of all life a new and glorious spiritual world. Marriage becomes a sacrament, and the care of children a glad service of the "church of God that is in thy house." Friendship grounded thus becomes an affinity of soul which is spiritual in its motives and immortal in its destiny. It makes grinding labor lose its degradation, and incessant care passes from being a penance paid for sin and becomes a contribution toward salva-

tion. To recognize all human relationships as only normal and healthy when grounded in man's highest nature is as true all along the line and in the remotest and most minute detail as it is to say, what every soul will admit to be true, that there is no earthly measure which can reach the height of that heaven in which love dwells, far above those degrading counterfeits that borrow its name to legalize crime and brutality. We admit as true that a house is not necessarily a home, a brood of children is not necessarily a family, united lives are not necessarily joined together of God, so long as lust can be distinguished from love. It is no less true of every other sphere; and the distinguishing glory of the work of Jesus Christ is that in adjusting human relations he put them upon a basis where they can be regarded as the earthly reflection of a heavenly fact. The light which shines upon the sea of human life is not a mere phosphorescent glow, but the reflection of all that overarching heaven which mirrors itself in these restless tides of our common life.

This was the sense in which Jesus said to them: "What one of you that is a father, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?"

Now, having put this upon its normal ground of tender human affection, recognizing its moral relationships, the argument rises by the legitimate inference: "How much more will your heavenly Father give."

This is a common method in argument with the Great Teacher,—to reason concerning God by comparison with the best in the human children of God, and by contrast with what is not best, and so not natural to these children of God. He reasoned not simply from "the natural elements of revealed religion," as is some-

times said ; as though any religion could be revealed which was not natural, or, if it could be revealed as in that sense supernatural, could be understood. To him the natural was the basis of the spiritual. "That was not first which was spiritual, but that which was natural, afterward that which was spiritual," is Paul's statement of the method of spiritual evolution. In the parable of the unjust judge Jesus reasons by contrast to the justice of God; and so, in the parable of the friend calling at midnight for bread to entertain a guest, and only by shameless impudence prevailing over the niggardly unwillingness of his neighbor, he reasoned by *contrast* to that bounty in God which needs no persuasion, saying : "Ask, and ye shall receive ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened to you : for every one that asketh receiveth." "He maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." Now, the Heavenly Teacher declares that by comparison also with our natural goodness, God can be shown to be good, and that we may find the unit of measurement of what God does *infinitely* in what we do in our measure. This is a vital contribution of liberal thought to religion. We did not originate it, but we rescued it and reasserted it.

In no one point do we differ from our evangelical friends more signally than in this view of the way to approach a concept of the divine character. We insist that to conceive of man as totally ruined and ignobly constituted is at once to dishonor God and to destroy any standard of measure for knowing God. It is no relief to the horrible conclusion that man is naturally incapable of virtue, to say that he is restored by the vicarious offering of a virtue not his own. We hold

that no more immoral suggestion has ever crept into theology than this of "imputed righteousness." "Imputed righteousness" is imported righteousness; and we hold that it cannot be thus transferred like a commodity and made a matter of trade, even though one of the parties to the transaction were God himself. We strike here the very crucial point of all right thinking concerning moral attributes; they must be the same in God and in man. Love cannot be one thing on earth and another thing in heaven. The only ground of likeness between God and man must be here; it cannot certainly be in any mere externality, unless we are prepared for an anthropomorphism which leaves the eternal God simply a magnified man. It has been well said that, "to simply extend the finite to constitute God, is not to secure the infinite, but the indefinite." If we would find a ground of likeness between God and his children, it must be in attributes that are not finite, but infinite,—infinite as love and faith and joy and peace are infinite: "love that passeth knowledge," faith "that entereth into that within the veil," — "the evidence of things not seen"; "joy that is unspeakable and full of glory," and "peace that passeth understanding." These are not attributes of the finite, but of the Infinite. They may dwell in the finite, limited in expression by that which expresses them, as music is limited by the instrument through which it speaks.

Thus the Great Teacher does not say how differently your Heavenly Father will do for you, but, "how much more will your Heavenly Father" feel and know what is kindest and best. Just as in the Old Testament God is represented as saying, "As the heavens

are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts,"—higher, but not different. The heaven and the earth are bound together by ties none can break without bringing chaos.

This reasoning from man to God is valid, strong, sufficient ; it is a reasoning from effect to cause, with the inevitable conclusion that that which is the cause of all these pure affections in man, this bounty of love that gives good gifts unto its children, though the giver be imperfect, "evil," mixed in motive, must itself be greater than the effect. Even as God is holier than man, so is his bounty greater than ours.

If Jesus had contributed no other method of thought than this concerning the Fatherhood of God, it would have been enough to mark him a Saviour among men. He saves men who gives them just views of God, and most of all the way by which these just views of God are reached. Starting not in some hypothesis concerning God, but in some known fact concerning man, he rallies their best impulses, he casts them back upon their purest motives, he declares they must trust the simplest and purest motions of their moral nature, and find in these the unit of measure for the character of the Infinite One. "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him."

Let me call your attention to one more significant element in this comparison.

The knowing how to give good gifts is based upon that native goodness which lives in man in spite of the evil with which it is associated. From the field of his

daily life he gathers the wheat for those who depend upon him, though it may grow among the tares of actual sin. How much more, says the Teacher, shall a being on whose purity no fleck or spot is found, who cannot be God unless he is good, who knows, with no dimness upon his vision, of the perfect good, who is "without variableness or shadow of turning"—how much more will this perfect goodness exceed the goodness limited, imperfect, and encroached upon by sin, and "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." The glory of God is his goodness.

There is no doubt here. Men can more easily believe God is not at all than believe eternal malice rules the world. I could point you to many illustrations of this seeking for a refuge in any supposition rather than to believe that God, if he be at all, is not perfect in holiness and justice. Very curious are the devices adopted to avert this conclusion among those who seek a philosophy of life. Its latest form is its most sophistical: agnosticism, so far from being the acme of philosophy, is the despair of knowledge.

There is no shorter road to the security of faith in God than that which Jesus of Nazareth pointed out at the beginning of his work and himself followed to the end: "I am not alone: the Father is with me." "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." What better end could there be than this, what strength more sublime? And what need of ours can be greater, more pressing than such a trust in infinite goodness waiting to fill with a Holy Spirit the spirits weary and spent.

There is many a prayer we cannot utter, many a gift it seems a selfish folly to invoke; in presence of many a loss and disappointment we must be dumb and fold our



empty hands ; but for this Holy Spirit we may always ask, this Holy Spirit we may always have ; and we can but infer by the way in which Jesus set it over against bread and life's common necessities that to his thinking it is the soul's necessary food, its daily need and its sufficient portion. We must believe his word. Reasoning again from earth's imperfect experience to heaven's possibilities, there can be nothing surer than this : that if a man ask that his body be the temple of the Holy Spirit, and, asking, dedicate that temple unto God, whatever else may fail, he cannot fail nor perish, nor even sorrow as those that have no hope.

THE  
WEEKLY EXCHANGE

A SERIES OF SERMONS

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP  
THOMAS R. SLICER

JOSEPH MAY  
THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

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ALL THINGS ARE YOURS

BY

THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

Minister of All Souls Church, New York

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SERIES II

MAY 28, 1893

No. 28

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BOSTON

GEO. H. ELLIS, PUBLISHER, 141 FRANKLIN STREET

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## ALL THINGS ARE YOURS.

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“All things are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.”—  
1 COR. iii. 22, 23.

In this wonderful summary of what your life and mine may be we have the Christian life set forth in its largest, most glorious aspects. These aspects are all different, yet all necessary to the full stature of spiritual manhood.

Let us try to set these great thoughts in relation to our actual lives, and to the language and ideas of our own time. Then we shall see that the thought of the apostle is a reaching out toward the highest and most satisfying truths which we think the special message of this century.

All things are yours. Already, centuries before, the Psalmist, in a sublime flight of faith, declared that God has given to man, being “little lower than the angels,” a “dominion over all the works of his hands.” But many centuries have passed, centuries of art and science and discovery, and still man’s dominion over the earth is not completely realized. It never will be. Wonderful as may be the future achievements of civilization, we may be sure there will always be new inventions, new experiments, new attack and struggle, in which science will unfold secrets deeper still, and art win some larger

mastery for man over the powers and elements of nature. Even to us, on the verge of the twentieth century, as to an apostle in the first, the word "All things are yours" is still a prophetic vision rather than a fact recorded. When we say that nature is at the service of man, we mean that such is her final law and destiny, not that such is our present relation toward her.

In this, as in so many profoundest matters, our best aid to clear thinking comes when we interpret clearly the Christian symbolism of Father and child. We all are children in a Father's house,—a house of many mansions. This glorious world we live in is to us as a palace of gifts and treasures to the princely heir who is yet a child. The palace is all his. Its gifts are his, its beauty and splendor are to his honor; and all its music and feasting only wait till the heir shall give command. In such a position is the soul of man, when we speak of man's dominion over the earth. The earth is ours; all Nature and every element is ours; but ours as the palace belongs to the child-prince. There are gifts we have not claimed, stately presence-chambers and dazzling corridors we have never entered, or peeped into only to be afraid. Nature is ours, not as the plaything belongs to the heedless child, to do with what he will, but as his father's whole kingdom and treasure belong to the heir of a throne,—his only as he shall grow up to claim, to comprehend, and govern them.

Is it not with some such faith as this that the modern explorer faces the facts and problems of Nature? He knows — and he constantly acts upon the knowl-

edge — that the strangest facts can be explained, the most resistless forces measured and employed to some human service. For untold ages men have lived and labored over the coal-beds and under the shadow of mountains of iron. Had any one pointed to the out-cropping veins of dark, barren-looking treasure, saying to the world, "These are wonderful gifts of God: all these things are yours," who could have understood such a message? For ages men have seen steam puffing uselessly away, and electricity has been flashing and snapping, no one knew how. There is not one force, of all which serve or gladden human life, but has been wasted by numberless generations as worthless or as unmanageable. The modern mind has addressed itself to a task never systematically attempted before. It is hopefully searching for the hidden treasures which nature holds. Dark continents are mapped out into provinces. The most remote wildernesses become the Eldorado of the miner, the ranchman, the planter. Then in common things, such as are found in every land, men are finding new uses, new preciousness. Clay is the ore of a noble metal, coal-tar is a philosopher's stone. Every known substance is enthusiastically studied, in the hope that in some happy combination it may effect services before impossible.

All this means that men now look to Nature, not as an enemy, but as a friend. We know we have a heritage there; and, with her secrets made ours, we shall win her kingdom also. Not a problem in mechanics but somewhere has been solved in the cunning architecture of plant or vertebrate or shell; not a task for

chemistry which has not been already accomplished in the laboratory of the air, in the alembic of the ocean. How does the bird fly on against the storm? What supports the cedar against the fury of the gale? What dyer can rival the pigments of plume and petal? What chemist can mix the elements which make our bread and wine? What physician's drug or cordial can withstand the ravages of disease as does health-giving Nature every day? Do not all the inventions of human art follow lamely toward what nature has already accomplished? Her powers, her substances, her processes,—all these things are ours. Nature, in her beauty and her silence, ever invites us to possess her, ever offers us new gifts of God, as we acquire the wisdom to receive and to honor them.

But surely, it will be objected, these enlarging borders of science are not what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he says, "All things are yours." He did not mean that man wins supremacy over Nature by reason and invention, but something deeper, something more personal. He meant that, if you follow the divine life as it is in Christ, you will get a mastery over the external conditions of your life; so that the material necessities which seemed but an unprofitable burden of the flesh will be all helpful and subservient to us. It is no triumph of mechanics he is rejoicing for, but for the triumph of your higher spiritual life over all the obstacles the lower life can bring.

Let us put these two conceptions strongly in contrast: our nineteenth-century gospel of science subduing nature, our first-century gospel of the soul

which lives like Christ getting a victory over the world.

I would not have you set aside either of these great ideas for the sake of the other. Both may help you to say, with a kind of proud joy, "All things are yours."

But see how each of these triumphant conceptions of human life needs the other to interpret it. Christ offers to men a certain mastery over life. He offers freedom and power. That is what his so-called miracles mean. And, when departing, he promises his disciples, "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto my Father." Never at any time has Christian enthusiasm, though uplifted to transfiguring visions of the love of God and preciousness of each human soul, been indifferent to the outward and material conditions of men. Not only has the kingdom of God been preached as spiritual and eternal, but they who may claim any place whatever in that kingdom must be sincerely concerned with man's lower wants and necessities. The Christian spirit does not stop with the inner man, but feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, heals the sick.

All these things the Christian Church, wherever it is alive, is to-day honestly trying to do,—trying to give men healthier bodies, better homes, stronger, happier lives, and more cheerful surroundings. It says, as its Master did, to a hungry, needy, suffering world, "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."

Out of the large, indefinite commandment, "Love thy neighbor," so spiritual, so simple, come the



highly specialized activities of Christian philanthropy, Christian education, Christian politics. Out of what is, at first, a heart-impulse, a profound spiritual faith in the dignity and preciousness of human life on earth, comes a stimulus to man's whole intellectual and practical life. Inspire a man to love God and love his brother, and more and more his whole being will be roused to study all nature's laws and powers, that human life may be healed, enriched, and set free by such reasonable service as he can render. Naturally and inevitably, therefore, in this age we now live in, Christianity becomes practical, scientific. To the aid of the great central purpose, which is love, every instrument may be employed, every art and every truth made fruitful in humane results. The clear meaning of what we call practical religion is simply that, while science and civilization are crying that man is king and master of the world, and "All things are yours," the message of Christian faith and life is to give to the victories of man's force and cunning a deeper and holier purpose.

The message is not only "All things are yours," but also "Ye are Christ's." It is not good that you should have mastery over what is below you unless you recognize some master above you.

St. Paul never loses sight of these two glorious facts in man's spiritual life,—mastery and submission. He conquers the world, he counts all things as God's gifts to him; but always he is the servant of Christ.

I will not inquire here how far our thought of Christ's nature and authority is one with that of Paul. Let that sacred name stand to you now as that of the

King of Love and King of Righteousness, as our true and higher humanity made manifest to men.

The truth which is the kernel of St. Paul's thought in this passage is that the more completely you get the mastery over the external and the mechanical conditions of your life, the more you must recognize some master above you.

What message does the world more truly need to-day? Never before was the power of man so great. It is an age of wonder, of hopefulness, with a proud self-consciousness that to the mighty and the wise among the sons of men hardly anything is impossible.

We must, therefore, keep faithfully and steadily before us the old question, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world?" All power must have a purpose. Riches and opportunities,—all this gorgeous and energetic civilization we are getting the harvests of,—do they make better, purer, gladder lives, happier homes, more peaceful hearts? The negroes of San Domingo, the unconverted natives of Hawaii, in their untutored way, can enjoy life better than we. What can be the only justification of civilized life? Nothing less than a civilization which shall bring forth the "fruits of the spirit."

The early Christians had ever before their minds the terrible prophetic conceptions of Antichrist, of Babylon. Babylon and Antichrist are power without love; a great victory won *by* man, and not used *for* man. Our Antichrist to-day is all force, all splendor, all knowledge and luxury, which, instead of making the world better, corrupts and hardens, separating men from God and from one another. The early

Christians looked at the golden Cæsar, and his laured, smiling, sensual pagan world; and they learned in the school of martyrdom the tragic lesson that until human power and pleasure be made subject to Christ and to God, until the crowns be cast with praises before the eternal throne, there is no heavenly life, no fulfilment of the Father's purpose for his children. Shall we not look upon this age of victory and peace in which we live, and ask everywhere whether these gifts which God has given to men, are bringing us nearer to our divine birthright of life given to God? "All things are yours." Yes, but "ye are Christ's": your power has a purpose, your privileges have a purpose; and that purpose is to help you in the Christ-like life.

Does all this seem to you vague and theological? Let us try and apply the truth to ourselves. Do you feel in your own life that all power you get over what is below you makes you more a faithful servant of what is above you?

I know that when men are in trouble or disappointment there is a turning of the heart to religion. I know that when men look up to God out of a sense of great weakness and sin there is a real response, a new life entering the soul. I do not disparage that kind of faith by which a man, out of his very littleness and ill success, takes hold of God's infinity; but is there not a more excellent way?

What are you doing with the strength of your life? How is it with your successes, your talents, your victories? Do these things, which give you such a sense of your own power, incline you to bow your head in

sincere, thankful reverence, and to know that all these things are nothing until they serve your better life and bring you into freer communion with your Father?

Do you not see that there are two kinds of success? There is success which so blinds a man with self-applause that he looks about him like the king in the Bible story, saying, "Is not this great Babylon which I have builded?" Such sense of power as that story describes is always the sign of a little soul. But, also, there is the success, the mastery of power and circumstance, which makes a man more faithful, more modest, more anxious to serve his brother, to see more truth, and to count his success, not as the product of his own petty self-hood, but as the gift and power of God in his life. Such a man knows in his heart that all true success is won by obedience. Such men, and such only, are always growing. They do not rest upon their laurels, they do not imitate their own past; for they feel that far greater than anything they have done, far more important, is the spirit in which the success was won, the fulness of life, the glory of living, out of which the success came.

You see this difference in whatever sphere a man's work may lie. The smaller man — orator, preacher, or pleader — is satisfied when he has made a fine speech; but the larger man is so filled with the truth and the situation of which his words were made that he thinks his fine speech a very little thing, — one strain of music humbly according with the full symphony of life about him. The smaller man, an artist, worships and caresses the work of his own hands. The

larger man adores his blessed vision, and passes on from truth to truth, knowing that his highest genius is but a servant of the true, the beautiful, the divinely alive. One man, immersed in practical affairs, counts up his own loss and gain, and flatters himself upon his shrewdness and energy. The larger man, the better man, feels most joy that his success has brought him in wide contact with the strong, clear-sighted men and the great social forces which are making his city and his country. To him commerce, finance, and invention, progress, social development, national prosperity are such large, such profoundly interesting things, that he takes his personal part in the movements that move the world with a sincere modesty and a desire to know more truth and render wider service every year he lives.

May we not measure a man's success, as we certainly can his spiritual worth, by just this attitude toward the powers and gifts at his command? "All these things are mine," he says. But does he say also, "I, I myself, am Christ's; I belong to what is higher than myself; and I can rule over so many cities only as I prove myself a faithful servant"?

Do you not see, friends, that such is the law of every really strong and effective life?

It was a fine old saying, a noble expression of what was best in chivalry, that the "fountain of honor is the King." A man gets his honor from what lies above him, not from what is beneath. The knightly warrior comes home with signs of victory, with all his spoils of war and scars of valor. He has proved himself a knight without reproach, a soldier whom his enemies

fear. Then the great question comes, Has he served his king? Not only, What has he done and dared? but, Was he a loyal and faithful knight? Do all his victories and successes advance the banner of his king? And, if so it be, he is straightway recognized and ennobled.

Our plain, unpoetical society has no longer such fine titles and stars for those who do the king's service; but it is true now, as always, that a man's honor and worth, the gladness of his life and value of his life, are not alone in what he does and dares, but according as all his fighting and his victory are not for himself, but a part of his service to God, to truth, and to mankind. Surely the inspiration of that old knightly nobleness which made men dedicate their swords, their lands, their noble names "to God and the King," is with us yet. It animates our generation in new forms. But the old truth remains, that your powers, your gifts of mastery, your possessions, are never ennobled, until all are dedicated powers. The true aristocracy, in every generation, is made up of the men who, winning life's battles and possessing the fruits of victory, use all these things in the spirit of service; and at last, out of all their struggle and gain, their own lives are brought closer to God, and show more of the divine life to men.

What is the secret of such dedicated strength? It is in that last and highest aspect of the Christian life as St. Paul sees it, "All things are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." He does not separate these aspects. To him it is all one life: the mastery over circumstance, the service for Christ, the life in God,—all these are one.

The time may never come when all men will think the same thoughts about God, or use the same words and forms in the attempt to utter the divine name; but let us try to see what is the meaning of this ancient word, that "Christ is God's." The name of Christ stands for our humanity made perfect, for human life filled with love and truth; every human excellence we can strive for, every pure joy and uplifted affection,—that is Christ. But this higher life was possible to Jesus, and is possible to us, only as it is life in God and life from God.

I know that some men live long and live usefully without this higher interpretation of life, which only faith and prayer give. A man may go on achieving mastery over circumstances, but never bring that mastery under subjection to the law of Christ. He may

"Live at ease, and full  
Of honor, wealth, good fare, aim not beyond  
Higher design than to enjoy his state."

A man may even truly honor and serve his fellow-men, may work for his country, and care only for the better and nobler things in human life; he may even, because he has a high ideal of what a good life is, reverence Jesus most sincerely; yet, with all this he may not rise to the standpoint of religion.

What that standpoint is we best express by pointing to the life of Jesus. To him all life was from God and for God. All power and beauty, all human love, the mystery of joy or sorrow, are but the various communication of the Father's life to the child's life.

You and I do not have this knowledge of the Father

as immediately, as perfectly, as it was in Christ. Individually our faith is feeble, and our prayers so mixed with self that we need the whole chorus of believing souls to call forth all the consciousness of God of which we are capable. You need not only your own language, your own experience, in which to express your faith in God, you need also St. Paul, à Kempis, Channing, Phillips Brooks, or whatever great, clear soul can bring you God's word most largely. So, if you ask any man his religion, he generally refers you to some authority, some name, saying, "I am of this church or that," "I follow such and such a prophet." But remember that behind all these authorities and teachers of you, is the ultimate truth, the divine life, which they struggle to utter. You are taught of them, they are taught of the Spirit. "Ye are Christ's," but "Christ is God's." All this mediatorial faith is but for a help, a beginning. Its consummation is reached when, instead of saying, "Show us the Father," you find God directly, personally, in the holy place of your own soul.

As the old catechism truly said, the "Chief end of man" is "to know God and enjoy him forever." To this end all else leads up,—all conquest of self and circumstance, all valiant service for truth and good, all fellowship with saintly souls,—it is that by these many ways you may be "filled with all the fulness of God." To this end is directed all the discipline your souls receive, both now and to all eternity. Gain or loss, power or weakness,—both alike can bring such larger measure of the divine life that, "whether we live or die, we are the Lord's."



I know we cannot sufficiently express or realize this supreme and final aim of man's existence. If we could, we should be mortal men no longer: earth could teach us no more, and heaven itself, to the soul with the perfect vision of God, would have no further revelation to unfold.

But whatever deepens and ennobles your spiritual life is always bringing you into a more living fellowship with the Father. Every conquest for truth and right, every faintest prayer, and every voice within you which yearns for God, is fulfilling the end for which God made you,— that you may belong utterly to him, and “stand before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”

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THE OLD THEOLOGY AND  
THE NEW

BY

SAMUEL R. CALTHROP

Minister of the Unitarian Congregational Church, Syracuse, N.Y.

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SERIES II

JUNE 4, 1893

No. 29

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## THE OLD THEOLOGY AND THE NEW.

“That which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”  
HEB. viii. 13.

I SPEAK to-day of the old theology and the new. I shall endeavor to give only salient and familiar examples, which may serve to bring out the startling contrast between the old and the new methods of thinking. By the term “Old Theology” I mean just what the text means, “that which is decaying and waxing old, and is ready to vanish away,” because it is antiquated, outgrown, and has become a grievous hindrance, to be got rid of as soon as possible by the whole Christian Church, without any distinction of sect.

By the term “New Theology” I mean the higher, truer, and nobler conceptions of God, man, and the world which are gradually entering the mind of Christendom, and are gradually displacing the effete conceptions of the Old Theology.

The New Theology is, in one sense, as old as the world of man. It is as old as the first genuine insight into things. It is only new relatively to us, to Christendom, and to the modern world at large. The Bible is full of the New Theology, if only you know where and how to look. The trouble has been that for centuries the mighty texts of the Bible have been belittled, and the small texts magnified, to an extent

which would be almost comic if the effect had not been so tragic. The Old Theology is slowly dying out of all the churches. A century hence its average way of thinking will have become well-nigh inconceivable. It must be sketched, if at all, before it has wholly vanished, and sketched by one who has been inside it and knows whereof he speaks. Into this Old Theology I was born, and its heavy yoke was on the neck of my youth. After a bitter deathlike struggle, I threw it off and was free at last. But millions are yet under the yoke of bondage; and it is largely for the sake of such that I here strive to sketch it as it was.

The Old Theology had as its foundation what it called "the will of God." Now, this will was in no way connected with the facts of things: it was just pure, arbitrary caprice. It found its texts from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. Indeed, in the last chapter of that weird Apocalypse was found the most awful confirmation of the absolute infallibility of the Bible from beginning to end: "If any man add to the words of this prophecy, God shall add to him all the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life." In the very last word that inspiration was to speak the divine Spirit uttered this awful warning. It mattered not that the Revelation was written long before most of the other books of the New Testament: the divine warning was equally emphatic. The Bible contained the whole revealed will of God, and the only way to know what that will is must be

reverently to listen to that revelation. If any so-called scientific facts seemed to oppose any part of that revelation, those were merely the spurious and ungodly product of carnal reason, the fearful foe of the Spirit everywhere. As Cowper sung, carnal reason dares to maintain that "He who made the world, and revealed its date to Moses, was mistaken in its age!" "*Ex uno, disce omnes.*"

Let us now proceed to details. Each separate detail will serve to make the contrast between the two opposing methods more marked.

1. The Old Theology knew all about the creation of the world: it was made out of nothing in six days of twenty-four hours each, evening and morning succeeding each other. Light was made on the first day, the firmament on the second; sea and land were divided, and the whole vegetable world created, on the third day; sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day; birds and fishes on the fifth day; and quadrupeds and man on the sixth. It knew all this without having made a single observation on land or sea; on sun, moon, star, plant, bird, fish, reptile, quadruped, or man. It knew it all without the facts, and, indeed, in spite of the facts. If the facts were against it, so much the worse for the facts. They would then be infidel facts.

The New Theology knows that the process of world-making is a scientific, not a theological question, and must therefore be decided, not by big and pretentious *a priori* assertions, but by prolonged and careful study of the facts of the world. It does not presume to dictate in a sphere of which it knows

nothing. It simply stands ready to receive the facts when science has set them in order. Its one grand all-embracing assertion is just this: "In the beginning, which is an eternal now, God doth forever keep on creating his worlds. From him they come, and to him they return." Its only contest is with the self-conceited scientist who goes beyond his facts and says, in his foolish and unscientific heart, "There is no God," which, if he did but know it, is equivalent to saying: "This is the stately order of the visible universe, and there is no foundation for it whatever. It rests on nothing."

2. The Old Theology knew all about the creation of man. It was well aware that God formed man directly from the dust of the ground by an immediate act of creation. No ages of life preceded and prophesied man's coming. There was no slow growth of life from less to more; but the first man, perfect at once, stood at once on the new-created earth. But the Old Theology also knew that there was a remarkable peculiarity in man's creation. The lower animals had, doubtless, been created in pairs; but one man was created alone. And the Lord saw that it would not be good for man to be alone; so the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he took one of his ribs and made a woman.

Now the New Theology is aware of its own limits. It knows that the physical origin of man is a scientific, not a theological question. The final verdict must be given, if given at all, by the students of animal life; by physicist, physiologist, geologist. It simply stands prepared to receive the final verdict

of science, when once it is given in. It also simply accepts the conclusions of historical scholars, which are that similar legends of the creation of the world abounded in ancient times, that the Hebrews probably received this legend from the East, and that it is plainly allegorical in form; and that is all. It is perfectly aware, however, that, not only do the worlds spring from the bosom of God, but that man's soul is from the same divine source. The details of the thousand thousand changes by which man's body arrived at its present condition it leaves, as it ought, to the students of these details. Its sole duty, as theology, is to protest against the cardinal error of imagining that mind can come without mind.

3. God made Adam and Eve, and put them into the Garden of Eden. As a test of their obedience he placed in the midst of the garden, ready to their hands, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and ordered them never to touch what was so pleasant to the eye and, apparently, sweet to the taste. They yielded to the temptation so close at hand, and hence —

“ Man's first disobedience and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world and all our woe.”

The fall of man is the foundation of theology, — the Old Theology. For, if there had been no Fall, there would have been no redemption; if no redemption, then no Christ, no death on the cross, no resurrection, no atonement, no salvation by belief in that atonement.



Now, mark: there was no organic connection whatever between the actual conditions of primitive man and this elaborately devised temptation. The temptation did not naturally spring from his constitution and environment. It was all artificial, arbitrary. It happened because God willed it thus. He might have willed a different series, but he did not. Of course this came about because the Old Theology, with blind literalness, took the mere outside words of the grand old legend, and never even asked if there were any secret meaning hidden beneath it. But this was what the Old Theology did throughout. It blindly worshipped the letter, and blindly missed the spirit. But now man is turned out of Paradise, and Cain, the elder son of Adam and Eve, becomes a husbandman, a tiller of the ground, and Abel, the younger, a shepherd, a master of flocks. We can hardly pause here to point out the charming simplicity with which the world-long antagonism between the civilized and nomad lives is brought into the legend. To the Old Theology all this, of course, was non-existent. It fastened itself on the main, the all-important point, the sacrifice of Cain and Abel. How well I remember the picture in the old family Bible where the smoke of Cain's sacrifice is going down to the ground, and the smoke of Abel's is soaring up to heaven! Why this difference? Because Cain offered the fruits of the ground, and Abel offered the firstlings of the flock. "Without blood there is no remission." The lamb that Abel slew in the morning of the world was a type of the all-atoning sacrifice that should be offered in the fulness of time. Note again, there was

no organic relation between Cain's state of mind and the rejection of his sacrifice. It was simply that he offered the wrong thing, and Abel the right one. We might have supposed that a man must offer that which he has, not that which he has not. But no. Thus early did God point out the only way of salvation. Once more, the legend itself points to Cain's sin of heart as the sole cause of the rejection of his sacrifice. But, to the Old Theology, that was of small consequence.

But now mankind grow worse and worse, and "it repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth"; and the Lord resolves to destroy mankind by a flood. Now, mark again: there was no organic connection of cause and consequence between the sin of mankind and its punishment. The punishment did not grow out of the sin, was not bitter fruit of which the sin was bitter seed; but God "chose" to punish mankind in this way, and no other. He might have chosen otherwise, but he did not. Here the Old Theology and the old legend are as one. Both alike assert that God punishes in perfectly arbitrary fashion. The Old World generally distinctly believed that "blight and famine, plague and earthquake" were alike punishments for man's disobedience; but neither the Old World nor the Old Theology believed that any one of those punishments was organically connected with the disobedience it was sent to punish. When I was a boy millions of Protestants believed that the Irish famine of 1848 was a punishment sent by God for the endowment by the English government of the Catholic College of Maynooth in Ireland.

Cholera is God's way of punishing men for infidelity, not for dirt!

In the legend of the deluge, one of the most beautiful touches is when the Lord sets his bow in the cloud, as a token that he will no more destroy mankind by a flood. "The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature." Beautiful, poetic, as legend; but the Old Theology took it all as bare, prosaic fact; and to the ugly question "How was it that the rainbow never appeared before the deluge whenever the sun shone through the rain?" it had its answer all ready. In Gen. ii. 5, 6 it is written, "The Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth; but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground." No mention of rain occurs till the deluge. Alas for the Old Theology! Marks of raindrops were soon found by the geologists on rocks formed ages before man was on the earth!

One more instance must suffice: "And the whole earth was of one language and one speech. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven." "And the Lord said, Go to, let us go down and confound their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." "So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth. Therefore was the name of it called Bab-el (or Confusion) because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth."

Here we have the Old Theology, pure and mere,

with all its delicious inconsequence, all its putting things topsy-turvy, all its astonishing intimacy with the exact thoughts, speech, and ways of God. God did not like the audacity of those early builders; so he punished them, not by the consequences of foolish hardihood, but by confounding their language,—a purely arbitrary way of procedure.

Now, the New Theology is aware of its own limits: it knows that the origin of the diversity of human speech is not a theological, it is a scientific question, to be decided by the students of language. The New Theology is simply prepared very modestly to accept the final verdict of scholars the moment that verdict is pronounced. That verdict is now ready, and is to the effect that the old legend exactly put the cart before the horse; that the diversity of language was caused by the scattering of men over all the earth, not the scattering by the diversity. Put two primitive peoples of the same original stock on opposite sides of an impassable mountain range, and in a thousand years they will not even understand each other's speech. The scholars, moreover, add that the Hebrew adapter of the legend made a mistake in supposing that Bab-el means "confusion" at all. It simply means "The Gate of God." He was misled by the similar sound of the Hebrew word *balal*, which does mean "confusion." All that the New Theology has to do with the matter is simply to say that the legend gives a very low, unworthy, and somewhat polytheistic view of God.

This must suffice for the legendary part of the Bible. Now, the New Theology is deeply interested

in all those ancient myths and legends which deal with great problems, and rejoices in every piece of insight or noble aspiration that it finds in them. It tenderly recognizes the oneness of the human race; sees that our God is the God of our fathers also, that they, too, trusted in him and were helped. It desires to penetrate into the very inmost of their faith and love, to climb to the sublimest heights of their noble daring, to be enlightened by their insight and uplifted by their inspiration. But it refuses to be shackled by the limitations of the past; it will no longer bow the knee to that which is not venerable. It will not be bound by the limitations even of our greatest fathers in the spirit. It will no longer swear by the infallibility of their mistakes. If they mistook legend for fact, the sooner the mistake is corrected the better it will be for mankind. When, then, the New Theology meets a manifest legend either in Old Testament or New, it calls it by its right name, a legend. It does not palter, or dally with a double sense. If the legend is beautiful, true to nature and the heart of man, it rejoices. But it still calls it a legend. It says "the legend" of Adam and Eve — "the legend" of the serpent, and the mystic tree, and the fatal fruit. The fall of man with it is not the foundation of theology: it is a beautiful, sad, poetic legend of primeval times. The deluge is a legend. The setting the bow in the cloud that the Lord might look upon it and remember his covenant with all flesh, is a legend,—a legend of high moral significance, but a legend. The tower of Babel is a

legend, and a legend pitched upon a low key of primeval thought. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Lot and Lot's wife, is a legend; but a legend steeped in a high moral indignation against shameful sin. These are the legends which shaped the moral and religious thinking of our fathers; and therefore they have to us a peculiar, and, indeed, pathetic value. Our children must know them, not as they did, but as the New Theology teaches them, as man's first attempts at serious religious thinking.

II. It would be impossible, in a single sermon, to do any sort of justice to the thought of the Old Theology concerning the law. Suffice it to say that all was from the mouth of God himself, from the solemn moment on Mount Sinai when, amid the thunder and the darkness, the awful voice of Jehovah was heard commanding that ram's skins dyed red, badger-skins, and oil for the lights be furnished at once. It was from Sinai itself that Jehovah issued his divine command that the Tabernacle should have exactly ten curtains, that each curtain should have fifty loops upon the selvedge of its sides, and that these two sets of loops should be fastened by fifty clasps; that the candlestick should have six branches, three on each side, with three cups made like almond blossoms, a knop, and a flower in each branch, and in the main stem four cups, knops, and flowers; that the tongs and snuffer-dishes should be ready below. It was Jehovah himself whose divine voice ordered pots and shovels, fire-pans and curtain rings, as well as the exact lineal dimensions of altar and table. Seams, gussets, and bands for the priest's dress, with direc-

tions how to make the arm-holes strong; linen breeches; and a careful receipt for making Jehovah's own perfumery, which no one else might use on pain of death, are only a small part of Jehovah's care for his people. In fact, the details of direct divine intervention and revelation mount up into the thousands in the law alone. I must pass these by, and say one word on the central rite, by which Jehovah's people were united to him forever,—the rite of circumcision. The covenant with Abraham was sealed by the rite of circumcision. This was the way appointed by God himself, and every uncircumcised man was to be "cut off from his people." Now, it is plain that circumcision has no organic connection with holiness. Any other rite might have been chosen, but God "chose" this; and his "choice" settled the matter. True, the early Christian Church found this rite a yoke to the neck, which would have surely stifled it had it not been for Paul's strong hand, which bravely threw it off. But God's "choice" put it on, nevertheless.

The New Theology has nothing whatever to do with circumcision. It knows very well that the origin of the rite is a historical, not a theological question. All scholars who read Herodotus know that circumcision was an Egyptian custom; and the Egyptian monuments show that it was in force there long before the time of Moses. It is probable that the Israelites derived it from Egypt, though many nations have had the custom. The New Theology leaves the question where it belongs, to historic science. It is simply well aware that the rite originated in man's thought, not in God's command. If any one say here, "What

is the use of saying a word more? why slay the slain?" I would answer, knowing whereof I speak, "This is only the first battle. Is it not better first to make the victory of the New over the Old secure here, where the common sense of mankind so plainly helps us, and where ingrained prejudice is least powerful? For we have a harder fight yet to come, when we approach nearer to the stronghold of the Old Theology."

III. One of the greatest arguments of the Old Theology was to show how the New Testament confirmed the authority of the Old. It is the most dangerous of infidelities to doubt that the story of Adam and Eve is an exact account of the facts in every particular, including the formation of Eve from the rib of Adam. For is it not written in 1 Timothy ii. 13, "Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman, being beguiled, fell into transgression." The physiological origin of woman, her responsibility for the entrance of sin into the world, and her due subordination to man, are thus divinely indorsed. Yea, even every particular is thus indorsed. Does any dare to doubt that it was an actual serpent that beguiled Eve? Let him listen in shame to 2 Cor. xi. 3: "The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety." Is any in danger of being led into infidelity about the reality and universal character of the deluge? Let him read Matt. xxiv. 37, 38 and Luke xvii. 26, 27: "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, and were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them



all." Here, from the very lips of our Lord himself, we have the indorsement of every fact mentioned in Genesis. Only a confirmed infidel will ever have a doubt again, if he lays this awful fact to heart. Jesus was "either a dupe or an impostor," if the whole world was not destroyed by the flood. Is any one in danger of being led into infidelity as to the exactness of the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? Let him turn at once to Luke xvii. 28, 29, "As it was in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but on the day that Lot departed from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all." If he dares to question the crowning wonder, Gen. xix. 26, "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt," let him read the very words of the Lord Jesus himself, Luke xvii. 32, "Remember Lot's wife." If Lot's wife was not turned into a pillar of salt, then Jesus was either a dupe or an impostor. In fact, every incredible thing in the Old Testament was backed up, and therefore proved, by a quotation from the New. I saw the other day, to my astonishment, a sermon of Mr. Talmage's in the newspaper, which shows that this method is not altogether gone. Mr. Talmage believes that Jonah was actually swallowed by an actual sea monster, and lived three days and three nights in his belly. Why? Because in Matt. xii. 40 it is written, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so the Son of man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." If all this was not true, then "Jesus was either a dupe

or an impostor," to use Mr. Talmage's own words. Imagine the truth of the Sermon on the Mount depending on the fact that the whale swallowed Jonah!

There is no end to this. You must not dare to doubt that Korah and his company of two hundred and fifty men were at once killed by fire from the Lord, or you will be led into infidelity with regard to Jude, verse 11, "perished in the gainsaying of Korah." The same epistle, verse 14, speaks of "Enoch, the seventh from Adam," showing that the genealogies of Genesis are simply matters of fact divinely revealed. This indorses the whole passage from which it was taken, — Gen. v.,— and shows that it is infidelity to doubt that Adam was one hundred and thirty years old when he begat Seth, and that Eve was therefore one hundred and thirty years when she bore him; and that Adam lived eight hundred years after that, and begat sons and daughters. The age of Eve when she bore her last child is not given (it may not have been more than four hundred or five hundred years). When once the authenticity of this chapter has been proved by Holy Writ (for, although its divine origin and infallibility were before assured, yet men's doubting hearts were vouchsafed a second confirmation by the Spirit), then it becomes easy, even for those weak in the faith, to see how the exact facts of the very creation might have been handed down. For Adam was a hale old man of only six hundred and eighty-seven years when Methuselah was born; and Methuselah must have had opportunities of conversation with him for two hundred and forty-three years. But Methuselah died in the very year of the Flood, the whole

distance of time from creation to the Flood being thus spanned by two generations. Now, it is true that Noah was five hundred years old when Shem, Ham, and Japheth were born, one hundred years before the Flood; but as Methuselah lived till the Flood, Shem must have had one hundred years of opportunity to converse with the old man, whose memory doubtless treasured up all the wonderful things that Adam had told him. But Shem lived five hundred and two years after the Flood; and Abraham could have known him very well, as Abraham was born only two hundred and ninety years after the Flood; and, in fact, Shem survived him by quite thirty-five years. When Shem died, Isaac was one hundred and ten years old, and Jacob was fifty. Jacob might well have seen and conversed with Shem in the land of the east, as he was only forty when he went, and, in ten years' residence with Laban, would surely have visited the venerable patriarch, the sole survivor of the days before the Flood. So we find that the memories of the creation and fall, of Paradise and its bitter loss, of Cain and Abel, had only to pass from Adam to Methuselah, from Methuselah to Shem, from Shem to Jacob, or, at the very least, to Abraham. From Jacob to Moses, the writer of the Pentateuch, are only four generations: Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses. So the account of creation had only to be handed down in this order to reach Moses himself: Adam, Methuselah, Shem, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses. Now, Levi lived one hundred and thirty-seven years, and must therefore have had many years' acquaintance with his grandson Amram. In

this case, the whole series, from Adam to Moses, would be only seven generations,—a less number than now are needed to reach to the Puritan Fathers; though such an argument is too great a concession to human weakness. A genuine faith should not need it at all.

Now what has the New Theology to say here? Simply this: you cannot measure by two standards. Old and New Testaments must be judged by one and the same. A thing that is legendary in one cannot, at the same time, be fact in the other. If the accounts either of Eve's birth or of Lot's wife's death are legends, no quotations from Luke or Timothy can make them facts. If Gen. v. is not really true, Jude will not mend the matter. In a word, the higher criticism has to be applied to the New Testament just as fearlessly, just as freely as to the Old. This is one of the great lessons which the New Theology has to teach to us all,—orthodox and liberal alike. We are to cultivate the most absolute fairness in our dealing with each separate book, ay, each separate paragraph in each book. We are not to try to bend book or paragraph one hair's-breadth toward our own opinion, toward our own most sacred convictions. In older times this was constantly done. The orthodox fathers rolled up a mass of three hundred and twenty-two texts in favor of their views; and the liberal fathers, not to be outdone, rolled up three hundred and forty-five in favor of theirs. So we triumphantly beat them, by at least twenty-three texts. But there is no end to this. The orthodox fathers set diligently to work and found thirty-three more. Then our fathers had to find thirty-seven more; and so on,

in an endless series. It is like entering a new world when we begin to realize the true function of criticism, which is simply first to discover the facts, and then to put the facts in their due order, and then, finally, to bring the highest faculties to bear in judging the final worth and significance of the facts. We are to be absolutely just to this or that ancient author. We are to endeavor earnestly to find out exactly what he meant, not what we want him to mean. We strip ourselves of every prepossession; we even shut our eyes to what good men of our own way of thinking have said.

If this is done, who can justly doubt, to give but a single instance, that the low spirit of revenge and retaliation can be found in the Book of Revelation? The Old Theology had, and still has, just claims to the passages in the Revelation where everlasting torments, the second death, and the lake of fire are glowingly depicted with startling power and with evident and grimmest relish. The New Theology grants the absolute justice of the claim. These passages are the spiritual ancestors of all that ill brood of unclean and hateful birds which, harpy-like, have defiled the Master's feast for well-nigh two thousand years. "How do you explain the text, 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still'?" I was once asked by an earnest new convert. "What you thought it meant was this — was it not? — if in the other world a man who has led a low and mean life here becomes sick of his injustice and his filthiness, and begins to yearn for justice and purity, the Eternal God will

for ever and ever prevent the wretched man from even beginning to try to be just and pure." "Yes, I thought it meant that." "You want to know, then, what to do with such a thought. Why, stamp upon it, stamp upon it!"

My time, not my subject, is exhausted. What I have just said leads to the crowning shame of the Old Theology. When I was a youth, at least three thousand incredible things were given to me to believe, under peril of my soul's salvation. One would have thought that this was, of itself, a pretty thorough training in the exercise of belief. But, mark it well, you might devoutly believe every one of the three thousand, and yet be lost forever. Your soul's salvation depended upon your believing and accepting with infinite thankfulness the whole counsel of God, of which these three thousand incredibilities were only a part. All culminated in this. Adam fell, and all the race fell with him. God's face was averted, his justice outraged; and eternal death to every soul of man was the penalty which that justice demanded. There was only one possible way of saving even a small portion of mankind: the Second Person of the Trinity must come down to earth. Being infinite, he alone could suffer the infinite penalty the sins of man demanded. Your crowning act of belief—without which your other thousand acts of belief would be of no avail—was to believe that his sacrifice was your salvation. The noblest life of self-devotion was absolutely worthless. One moment of belief in the all-sufficient atonement was enough to save you eternally. But, understand it well, you

must submit your will absolutely to the divine will. You must remember that only a small portion of mankind can possibly be saved. You must secure your own salvation from the wrath to come, which will plunge into infinite torment all the billions of heathen who never heard of Christ, and all the millions on millions in Christian lands who did not accept the great salvation. You are not only to acquiesce in all this: you are to sing forever the praises of His grace who has delivered *you* from the fate of the vast majority, and to exult in His righteousness who is torturing the heathen for ever and ever for not having heard that gospel which by no possibility could they get to hear.

This was the crowning outrage of the Old Theology on the human soul. To stuff a man full of old wives' fables was a small thing. It proceeded to steal his manhood from him. It made him, for the sake of keeping a whole skin himself, turn traitor to the whole human race, for which, as a man, he was bound to witness anywhere and everywhere, through weal and through woe.

It was this incredible meanness of the Old Theology which finally delivered me from its bitter yoke of bondage. There came a day when, with all the strength of youth, I rose against it in scorn and threw it to the winds. And the sun shone, and the birds sang, and the golden summer seemed rich and blessed as never before; for through nature, and through my soul, the love of the Eternal Father for me and for all men began to shine; and the central thought of the New Theology was mine forever.

The Old Theology had to be defended, apologized for, or explained away, at every turn. The New Theology lays its stress on things that indorse themselves. Its greatest teacher always insists upon experiment as the final test. The moment you have heard the law of love, proceed at once to put it into practice. Then you will know that the house of your life is founded on a rock. Hear the sayings, then do them. Live the law of love for one day. Then you will at once know that it is the law of the universe, and you will long to live it forever. Live the law of hate for one day, and then you will long to forsake it forever. God is love, and love is without variable-ness or shadow of turning. One of God's ways gives you the key to another, and that other to another. The Infinite Love has his own style; and you will soon learn to recognize that style everywhere, and you will begin to imitate it.

The main business of the New Theology is to investigate man's relations to himself, to his fellows, and to God; to find out the natural attitude to be taken to all three. To this end, it lovingly accepts all the inspirations of all the past; uses, to this end, all knowledge that the sons of flesh have gathered; and, in doing this, points the way to yet further discoveries and to yet nobler inspirations. It brings into one focus all the light that shines both in Old Testament and New, and all the light that has shone upon all peoples in all times and climes, and all the light which shines upon all men in all lands to-day. For God is light, and all light is of God.





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Pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia

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## INSPIRATION.

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THE radical truth, out of which the present discussion must grow, is that of the essential identity of the divine and human natures. This is a postulate of religion. Unless it be true, we can never know God, much less enter into intelligent relations with him. In the expansion of his traits, Deity infinitely transcends humanity and rises above human comprehension; but, if the traits of his nature are not (so far as ours extend) essentially the same with man's, then we cannot even apprehend them or imagine them. If he has traits other and essentially unlike ours, these we cannot even guess at. Our inferences from nature, as well as the accepted intuitions of faith and the instinct of worship, all presuppose this general truth, — the essential likeness of Deity and humanity.

So we believe of God, in general terms, that he is a vital being; a being possessed of powers and forces; a rational being; a moral being; a being capable of emotions and affections. We predicate of him, necessarily, force (or will), mind, emotion, moral qualities. Take away any of these attributes, and he ceases to be God in any sense satisfactory to religion. To apply the divine name to the physical forces of nature, or to a mere idea, or to a generalization like

"humanity," is to utter a misnomer, to abuse language. At least, the present inquiry is precluded on any other condition than that I have named.

But if God exists, and is such as we assume, another truth immediately presents itself. It is this; God must express or manifest himself. His traits or attributes are such as logically compel this. Vitality, will, mind, affections, morality, cannot remain inoperative and inexpressive. Vitality implies functional activity and procreative ability. Will implies its exertion. The activities lodged in an entity possessed of force are spontaneous. Mind implies activity; a thinking being not only can think, he does think. So the affectional and moral natures imply self-expression. A good and loving God must desire to procreate a spiritual family and to enjoy the delight of blessing them and of winning their love.

Now, there are two grand ways in which such a being may express himself. The one is through the outward world, the world of sense; the other is in the inward world, the world of spiritual relations. Possessed of force, he may operate effects in the material universe; as spirit, he may directly reach the kindred spirits of his offspring. So we have two parallel fundamental and instinctive beliefs of religion; first, that God has called into being, sustains, and governs the outward universe, through which course the "forces of nature" (as we call them, but which are really only the diversified manifestations of the divine personal will); and, second, that Deity is, and has always been, in direct personal relations with men. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the

earth." "There is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." The modes and extent of this personal relation of God with men have always been debated; they can never be exhaustively described or known, since the finite intellect can never comprehend the Infinite. But the substance of them has been implied in all religious belief and sentiment. And this is what we mean by inspiration.

*In*-spiration, the *in*-coming of God's spirit to man's. But God's spirit is himself, and man's spirit is himself. Inspiration, then, is only the approach, the direct, personal approach, of God to man. It corresponds, obviously, to prayer, which is the uprising, the approach of our spirits to God. The two are the two elements of communion between God and man, each correlative with the other, as Jesus implied when he said that, in answer to prayer, God would not fail to give men his Holy Spirit. If, in the secret of one's closet, or in public "in the great congregation," one has really risen, in the essence of his being, a little toward God; if one's spirit has been actually lifted into contact with the Divine Spirit, one has prayed. Life may be a prayer if one lives habitually in this contact, as some have done. The corresponding relation of God to us, his *answering* approach to and communion with us, is inspiration. August, profound, high, the thought is; but in essence it is simple. Obviously, upon our assumption of the essential likeness of Deity and humanity (which Jesus, greatest of religious philosophers, postulated in his doctrine of God's paternity and human child-

ship to God), the case is strictly parallel in its nature with that of genuine communion between the spirits of men.

And by reference to such communion of human spirits we actually best illustrate the various problems connected with inspiration. For example, as to the substance of inspiration, who has not received its counterpart from a human friend? In all the common intercourse of life, it is a scarcely noticed, but pervading and most effective influence. Every man is, at any moment, not only what he is in himself, but what he becomes under the impression of the spiritual natures with which he is more or less closely in contact. From every one of us there go out, constantly and irrepressibly, spiritual influences corresponding to his character, affecting whomsoever they may reach. It is often said of a physician that his presence is worth more than his prescriptions. In warfare, the contagion of a courageous character stimulates all others and helps them to be heroic. You are led into the company of some good man. The conversation may be wholly neutral in its character. You may discuss not one of the higher problems of life, nor receive from him a syllable of actual homily; but you come away refreshed in all your better nature, your mind newly aroused and oriented, the all of you ready for new effort and endurance. Of such experiences we often use, and rightly use, the word "inspiration." Sometimes we call it "magnetism." The essential fact is that one's spirit has come into communion or contact with others; and the influences proceeding from those others, their "drawing nigh,"

or "incoming," have given stimulus and revival to one's own. These spiritual or personal influences correspond to those of the material world. They radiate spontaneously, as heat from the fire or light from the sun. One cannot be in the presence of another without, in some measure, giving them forth and receiving them.

So of God. The Infinite Spirit cannot be in the universe without these influences going forth from him. We live, everywhere and momentarily, under them. And all the energies of his infinite nature are perpetually in complete activity. He is at all times all that can be, both in himself and to every one of his children and his creatures. So the influences proceeding from him are constant and all-abundant. His presence is like that of the all-pervading air, whose pressure, indeed, we do not know that we feel; but shut one's self off from it on any side, and how tremendous! Withdraw it, pollute it, and we perish. Open but the door or window, and how it streams in to revive one! We cannot get figures from the natural world too tremendous for the analogies of the spiritual. But the subtileness and gentleness of the divine forces, in either realm, are equal to their potency. A prominent mining engineer told me that he had lately stood in the engine-room of some great iron-works at a time when, from the large apartment, the blowing engines were removing every hour an amount of air *more than ten times* the capacity of the room. All this air was being forced in by the pressure of the external atmosphere through the accidental crevices about doors and windows. But so gently was



this vast operation going on that, when he opened the door to enter, he had felt a waft of warm air come strongly out, like a summer breeze, upon his face. So tremendous, no doubt, so irresistible, and yet so gentle and unperceived, is also the descent of the infinite Spirit of God upon human souls.

To proceed, the human analogy which we were following will indicate also the *conditions* of the divine incoming. Thus how often we are in each other's bodily presence, exchanging courtesies, seeing and hearing each other, and yet conscious that our real selves are infinitely wide apart! Sometimes this takes place; you are drawn to some other, and begin to open yourself to him, as we say, happily going out to him, when something in his manner or speech or tendency of thought suddenly arouses a suspicion or antagonism. Instantaneously a change comes over your feelings; you are conscious of a barrier erecting itself within you; you draw back in the spirit, while yet your lips move freely and politely and the conversation goes on in form as before. There is no longer *communion*. The other may draw near to you, still, but you have withdrawn from him.

Or, again, you are in the company of some great and good man; but you are low, unspiritual, unready to be influenced by him; or you are, only for that moment, perverse, unsympathetic; you are conscious with a sense as of guilt, perhaps, that you are shutting him out.

Here, then, we have the indication of the primary condition of inspiration; that is, *receptivity*. Though another spirit may approach one's own, to come in it

must be admitted, or there is no inspiration. As in prayer, though God be never so accessible, the human spirit must rise, or there is no prayer. In a word, it is a natural and necessary law of inspiration that God can come into us, can inspire us, only on condition that, and so far as, we are able and ready to admit him. As David said, "The Lord is nigh to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth." And Saint James said, "Draw nigh to him, and he will draw nigh to you." And as Jesus said, "God is Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

One of the most terribly impressive suggestions of Jesus, which has given rise to no end of superstition, is a wholly philosophical statement, and vividly illustrates this law of receptivity regulating inspiration. "All manner of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, . . . neither in this world nor in the world to come." This is merely the statement of a natural and necessary truth. To blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is not to utter mere ribald words of profane import. It is to outrage the Spirit by refusing it admission. It is to turn away God from the heart's doors with contumelious rejection of his loving, saving approach. To be *accepted* is all God really asks from his children. Their childish, ignorant, perverse denials and aspersions of his majesty, with all other wickedness, he can forgive, for his accepted presence will purge all away; but he cannot bless with forgiveness the soul which persists in an attitude of hostile alienation, for he cannot

reach it with his healing, reconciling influences, whether in this world or another.

But not only is inspiration conditioned thus by the general attitude of our minds; it is conditioned also in particular by our individual mental constitutions. Character consists in the susceptibility of the individual to the divine elements or forms of truth, the adaptation of his spiritual structure to apprehend and use them. The presence of God with us is a grand energizing force, urging and stimulating all our faculties. But it is obvious that its effects will be chiefly manifested in those which are most highly developed, most susceptible to stimulation. To state it in another form, as God is all truth, his presence with us is the presence of all truth; and the individual mind responds to those elements of truth which it is best able to understand and appreciate and desire. We see one man constitutionally susceptible to the truth of beauty; he is an artist; but he may be in equal degree deficient in susceptibility to moral truth. He may be at once an artist and a criminal. We see another highly sensitive to the truths of human relations; he is a philanthropist; but he is utterly untouched by the truths of form, color, or sound. So the influence of God's presence with these contrasted organisms, pressing equally upon all, will exhibit itself most fully in those particulars of their character which are most susceptible. And thus we shall have our Isaiahs and Davids, our Homers and Shakespeares, our Raphaels and Mozarts, our Anselms and Howards and Channings.

Nor is only this true. We not only vary as indi-

viduals among others, but each one may vary within himself as to his capacity for receiving inspiration. Are there not hours when each of us is, somehow, peculiarly plastic to various forms of truth; hours when one is more than usually susceptible to beauty, to love, to moral duty; hours, most blest of all, when (perhaps through vicissitude of earthly condition) one is strangely responsive to the whole incoming of the Divine, and able, as not usually, to rise into his felt presence? These are "God's opportunities," when his spirit flows into ours newly and more abundantly, as the reviving air of morning presses in at our opened windows, after nights perhaps of peaceful, composing slumber, perhaps of weary grief or of wasting pain.

I have thus far (imperfectly, according to the measure of this brief essay) tried to exhibit the nature of inspiration and its practical conditions. My principal aim has been to show it to be a universal and generic, not a particular and individual relation of the Divine to human spirits; mysterious, indeed, but not miraculous; constant, not occasional; normal, not irregular or capricious. It remains only to inquire after its results.

We have seen that spirits approach each other, reach each other, commune, on condition, and to the extent of, and according to their natural and acquired adaptation of structure, or, in common words, according to their fitness for sympathy. But it is a truism that what we sympathize with *we understand*. The sympathy is possible because of mutual likeness; and that which is like ourselves we understand, because

in ourselves and our own consciousness we have its counterpart. To the extent, therefore, of our own knowledge of ourselves; of our spiritual quickening and exaltation,—that is, according to our capacity to receive him,—when God comes to us, *we know him*. In a word, to the extent to which we receive inspiration, we have also *revelation*. The God who comes into us is *unveiled* to us. We see him no longer in a glass darkly, groping after him if haply we may find him among outward phenomena or by the indirect processes of reasoning, but face to face.

Revelation, then, is also a natural and necessary fact, the concomitant and result of inspiration. But this does not mean revelation in the common meaning of the term, but in a deeper and truer sense. As in common usage inspiration has meant not God's quickening presence, open to and pressing upon all souls, but an especial influence arbitrarily exerted upon select individuals, so revelation has meant, not the direct spiritual knowledge of God, the apprehension by sympathy of his nature and character and relations to us, but practical information, the verbal communication of outward facts of his past dealings with men, of his present providential plans and future purposes. But, without now discussing the alleged proofs of any such supposed communications from God to men, it is sufficient to point out that they could never, if verified, convey to men true knowledge of God. *Information* reaches only to the mind, the intellectual part of man. It could convey only knowledge *about* God, not the knowledge *of* God. We might have of it all that has ever been pretended, and still men might not know him. The very dead might rise, as Jesus said,—

“Angels descend with songs again,  
And earth repeat the loud Amen,” —

and still they might not know him. “Who by searching hath found out God?” It is only when the spirit which is in man, the all of us, is brought into that true relation of sympathy with him that we are in actual contact with the object of knowledge, so that it becomes possible for us to apprehend and understand what it is. Only then, when we are at one with God, do we know him even as we are known of him. Only when the man is inspired is God unveiled.

But let us note, finally, what this revelation and true knowledge of God must in the ultimate instance result in. In essence and in extent, we have seen, inspiration and revelation depend upon the *likeness* of the human spirit to the Divine. So far as this extends, so far does the man know God; and so far he *reflects* God. The lover of beauty knows God in æsthetic relations, and is God-like in his love of and skill in plastic art. The nobly moral man may reflect the divine righteousness. The man of mighty will may image the infinite energy of God. The philanthropist may be divine in his love of his brethren. But suppose all these things in one. It is plain that the soul which should surrender itself *totally* to the Divine incoming must become (to its own extent) completely like God, understanding and responding to him in all parts of his nature, revering him in all his traits, willing all, and willing only, the things he wills. To the full extent of its own capacity the human spirit will have taken in the Divine Spirit;

and all its springs of feeling, of thought, and of action, will be filled and energized and governed by the indwelling God. In the man we see the "fulness of the Godhead," the plenitude of present Deity, enshrined. Then (if I may here borrow a former statement of my own), "when the two wills thus united coincide in the direction of their operation; when the all of the manhood surrenders itself in sympathy to co-operative Deity; when the man loves as God loves, purposes as God purposes, wills as God wills, then, freely and of himself, yet under the single direction of divine impulse, the man acts by, for, and as God. Though the human soul remains individual and the human will free, the action of the man is also the action of God. The two are one, not in person, but in efficiency and in semblance. The man is man, God is still God alone; but the Divine Spirit has taken up its abode in the human economy, the human faculties are energized and directed by the divine co-operative will, the Divine Spirit is normally *incarnate* with the human, its spring of power, its guide, its vital force."

*Incarnation*, then, is the ultimate result of inspiration. Where the Divine Spirit enters by inspiration, there it dwells by incarnation.

Is not this the phenomenon presented to us in the career of *Jesus*? In him the confident apprehension and unreserved acceptance of the Divine Spirit took to his consciousness the character of a complete union. "I and my Father are one." The Christian world has felt the reality in him of this august fact, and has confused his *personality* with that of Deity. The fact

was not this, nor that the all of Godhead was in him; but that (in the manner I have tried to suggest) the whole capacity of that transcendent manhood opened itself to the incoming Spirit of the Divine. If, as parent and offspring, a common nature is in the two, the product of this *total* inspiration must be the ideal man. And also it must be the image of God.





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HOW DOES LIFE LOOK TO  
YOU?

BY

THOMAS R. SLICER

Minister of the Church of our Father, Buffalo, N.Y.

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## HOW DOES LIFE LOOK TO YOU?

“I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee.”—2 TIM. i. 6.

ONE of the perplexities confronting all earnest souls is this: the problems which vex the one part of humanity do not vex the other part; and yet these two classes are intimately related in all other ways,—only in their way of looking at the puzzle of existence do they seem wholly unlike and out of relation. We cannot avoid asking ourselves the question, If the struggle to understand life's puzzle is going on in one human soul, until it seems in a perpetual Gethsemane, why is this struggle dismissed from the soul standing next? This question is the despair of the reformer, and the burden of the prophet. Why is one life torn by the struggle for a perfect self-development, while the very next of kin, or nearest in station, is steeped in self-indulgence? There are those who would “make all things new,” and there are those who would “let well enough alone.” In a word, why is it that certain souls are sifted, winnowed, and tossed, while others, subject to the same responsibilities, yet sit before them quiet and undisturbed, sometimes even surprised that there should be any subject so interesting to any other soul?

This question constantly recurs to vex earnest men and women, and, it must be confessed, to seriously embarrass them also, even to cause the suggestion to arise whether all moral passion is not something abnormal and to be suppressed. The tax on feeling and effort seems not to have been levied equally, and the immunity of one becomes the temptation of the other.

Let us inquire what may be the cause of this difference of experience and of moral behavior.

Three reasons appear to lie at the root of this difference between men in the presence of life's problem:—

The struggle of soul may be present in one soul, and absent in another, because,—

1. The vexed soul may be troubled about what has no existence to the other soul. Its trouble seems vain and useless to the soul not so troubled. It seems to be contending in an imaginary conflict with fictitious enemies. The whole matter is interesting from the point of view of the psychologist, and not based in reality.

2. The struggle may be in one soul and not in another, because the former penetrates below the surface, which the latter only touches. This last is not penetrated by life's grief, because it has not sounded life's depths. It skims the surface of an untroubled pool, like one of the "ephemera."

3. The untroubled and quiet soul may have solved the questions which vex the other. In this case its peace is the result of conquest, and its calm has been brought to it after storm.

These are three classes who present an immunity from struggle and moral conflict, and to whom the man

of moral passion seems an inconvenience and sometimes a rebuke.

These three types of mental history may be called, respectively, the man of flesh, the man of this age, and the man of faith. The first disclaims moral questions, the second avoids moral questions, and the third controls moral questions. Now, it will doubtless occur to some one to inquire, Why there is omitted in this summary the consideration of temperament as a factor? The answer to such a question is that we are now dealing with root principles, not with mere accidents of the individual constitution. This not a question of taste or of preference, but of life and its moral pressure. We are in the habit of saying, There is no disputing about taste: no more is there any dispute about hunger. It may be a matter of temperament as to whether a man is pleased with a certain landscape, but to make that same landscape bristle with corn or golden with wheat is not the task of temperament, but of skill and industry. Let us not take refuge in temperament lest we excuse ourselves for an indifference which does not lie in the blood, but in the very fibre of character. Principles of moral action are as rudimentary as hunger; and achievements, which wait upon spiritual enterprise, are not to be set aside lightly as not adapted to our temperament. The salvation of society is not a matter of taste. We will now return to our three reasons given to account in part for the fact that some men struggle like gladiators in the arena, while others look on like spectators from the seats above the bloody sand.

1. The first class of the unmoved are those specta-

tors who are not convinced of the reality of the contest nor of its necessity. It is a show, and they are entertained. They cannot therefore be expected to feel hurt by a struggle in which they are not involved. That there is blood on the sands of the arena is not to the purpose: it is not the blood of the looker-on. He even casts down a crimson rose, and it looks like another splash of blood upon the sand. This the attitude of the sceptic, the man of an easy cynicism. "It has been well said that such an one" has not built his life upon the three reverences; for his attitude toward things above him is agnosticism, toward things around him it is scepticism, and toward things beneath him it is cynicism. Far be it from me to underrate true inquiry! That scepticism which lays hold of the roots of thought, that clears the ground which is occupied unworthily, which enters, axe in hand, the tangled thicket of traditional and conventional beliefs, and clears a path for the feet to run the way of life unhindered, which fells a forest, and plants a field where it stood,—this is the office of a noble inquisition. This is the scepticism of the discoverer: it is a denial in the interest of a new world. The scepticism of which I speak is that cynical habit of mind which impugns all reality and is unvexed by any struggle of soul: it seems not worth while. But it will be well for us to ask whether there are not some things real, beyond dispute, and without a struggle, real beyond remedy. For instance:—

There is that constant problem,—my own being and its meaning. I cannot deny I am. I ought not

to be careless what I am to become. The forces of circumstance, passion, and nature, are plying me on all sides. One must be curiously exempt from the common lot if these do not present the risk of degradation to him or constitute the challenge to virtue. The task of self-development is set us. The responsibility of moral influence is laid upon us. The fact of sin obtrudes itself through all the disguises of feeling. Each must say to himself, It is certainly true that I am a man beset with temptation, crippled by limitations, arraigned by moral duties, and confronted by daily tasks. Is there nothing in this to make a human soul struggle? The way is narrow which leadeth unto life. "Agonize to enter." It will mean such agony as comes with birth. But it will mean the power of life to procure new life. Life is the ultimate reality. But this life is not alone. Multiplied by itself, it constitutes society:—

" For I, a man, with men am linked,  
 And not a brute with brutes; no gain  
 That I experience must remain  
 Unshared."

The very things which cause a real struggle in the individual man produce society. It is the law of being that it shall be creative: the conflicts of nature, the power of love, the appeals of sin, the sense of moral values, the thralldom of circumstance,—out of these grow the aggregate we call society. Its reality is a tragedy and an opportunity. Its destiny is struggle. It is the history of the escape from barbarism. It is the price of liberty. Its self-control is the



guarantee of its emancipation. Two human beings within touch of each other, however far-reaching the circumstances may be which relate them, however attenuated the bond which binds them, have a moral problem on their hands on which the well-being of society depends. It is the average answer to this question which constitutes the advance or retrogression of society. There really is no room for idle lookers-on where this tragedy is going forward. Its reality intrudes everywhere, and claims the earnest souls for struggle and rebukes the idle souls for their sloth. It cannot be waved aside: it cannot be accounted for by set phrases about "the steady gain of man." Congratulations which we have no right to utter condemn us by the silence they compel. What is the reality which confronts the earnest man as he regards society? Inequality, which provokes a fever in the blood. Superabundance, which paralyzes by the inactivity it procures on the one hand, and drains to exhaustion by its ebb out of the lives which lack it. Greed, which is never satisfied, which is always lean. Envy, which is never content. Wrath, which is never appeased. Poverty, which increases with the birth of children, and transfers the burden from the breast to the heart. Contentions, which are not honorable. Success, which is not noble. Happiness, which is not blessedness. Mirth, which has a sound of bitterness in its laughter.

These are some of the signs of death in the social organism which confront the earnest man who will turn his eyes upon his fellows. Is it any wonder that he should be troubled? Is it strange that he should

feel all the despair of helplessness, and wish that he could coin his blood to buy from such slavery the children of God? Is it not, on the contrary, most strange that any can be found who will still say that the reformers are over-earnest, the philanthropists are unpractical, that these who cry in this wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God!" are visionary? It is strange. And yet it must be remembered that to such the whole scene lacks reality: they ignore it; they are untroubled by the trouble of the world. If they would but once set their blue-veined hands under the drooping head of actual pain, they would never again say that it is strange that moral passion is bowed down under the load it seeks to carry out of the world. Its disproportionate weight falls upon the few, while those who shrink and turn away

"Build up about their soothed souls a world  
That is not God's, and wall them up in dreams,  
So that their hearts may cease to beat with his,  
The great World-heart, whose blood forever shed  
Is human life, whose ache is man's dumb pain."

No man can be much blamed for thinking there is no God, while so many say there is no pain nor sorrow nor sin with which every man is concerned and bound to do his share to take away. One Calvary is not enough. There should be a perpetual incarnation and an unceasing atonement.

2. Now let us consider the second reason for the difference of emphasis upon the value of life and the moral passion which it inspires. Not the same in spirit,

though like it in kind, are those who touch only the surface of life, and are not troubled by any depth of feeling or conviction. These are not cynical as to the reality of moral struggle either in the individual or in society: they are simply at play with life. It does not seem seriously to concern them, because they themselves are not serious. They give their color to all they come in contact with. It is not my purpose to make the impression that I regard life as a sad and depressing reality. It can only be this when no human love is at work upon it to make it better and stronger and sweeter. To the man who knows its value it is an opportunity, a joy, and a privilege. But we need not take our joys superficially. They are not like cut flowers, but like plants rooted well and pledged to a constant bloom in their season of bloom. We must not hold the privilege of life lightly, nor be careless of our opportunity. Life is a great deep, and its resources are discovered to those who do not fear to launch out into it. A man must be willing to take some risks who would find a path in the deep: all discoverers run the risk of being lost. Enterprise has its risks as well as its rewards. Moral enterprise, no less than that which enlists so much of our strength and intellect, must take all life in its hand, ready to lay it down.

In view of this, I say it is my firm conviction that, when a soul has dedicated itself to superficiality, it has not made a compact with joy. On the contrary, it has made all permanent peace impossible. "On every height there lies repose." In the deep places of life there is peace to be found; but the way to the

height is arduous, and the way to the depths is stifling and storm-beaten. We must gird ourselves for a hard climb if our way is upward; and, if we would go below the surface of life, we must submerge ourselves in the affairs of our kind. We must know the soul's most intimate life and share its real experiences. To refuse to do this brings a temporary peace,—a respite from struggle; but it brings an accumulating burden which will fall upon the empty life when its strength is gone and joy is dead. Let no one suppose that life's problems give us up because we refuse them attention. The solution waits us, however long delayed, and will be complicated by the perplexities growing out of our own neglect. If we do not judge ourselves and control our life, we will be called before an inexorable tribunal in some moment of crisis, and under a searching inquisition may find we have forgotten the language in which true souls make answer at such times.

So the vexed soul carries on its struggle, seeking to solve the problems of existence and duty. The soul, unvexed, turns its life forces upon the temporary and the incidental, and vainly thinks it has escaped its doom. But its doom is sure. Even upon the face of the trifler is his condemnation written. In his life there is a want of power, intellectual, moral, social. There is no force in his speech, there is no power of sustained attention in his thought, there is no relish in his employments. He has played with life, and has outgrown his toys. The power to see truth instantly is often in such a nature lost. He becomes incapable of an heroic attitude of mind, his

athletic habit is lost, and the whole moral nature has turned to pulp. He is a "light-of-love," and to such a one a transfiguring passion is impossible. The habit of intellectual compromise makes thinking in straight lines dangerous. The weighing of popular opinion makes a man anxious for the arrival of some force from the outside which will assist him in the ordering of his own mind. It makes the large view impossible. Even the habit of measuring details, instead of dealing with principles, tends to prop the soul here and there with the incidental and the temporary instead of binding it fast in all its being with the eternal and the inevitable. A man who thus cobbles his life together will lose the sense of power as a sharer in the energy of the Creator.

This dwelling upon the surface of things means ruin to the best nature. This appears in the young people all about us, who find life already to some degree uninteresting. If their parents should discover them taking stimulants to get through the day, what a panic would seize them! But these same young men and women already feel the necessity to prod their flagging interest in common life. They have scanned its surface, and they find it stale; they have seen it! How pitiful, how tragic all this is! No interest! No freshness! No power to enjoy! No power to think deeply nor feel keenly! No fine delicacy of soul! the bloom and beauty of life permanently impaired! It is not to be wondered at that such souls as these feel that enthusiasm is abnormal, and moral passion an inconceivable absurdity. God only can know what place in the economy of the future the

superficial will serve, but their presence now to any deeply moved nature is a hindrance and a perplexity.

We have now considered the calm of the cynic and the quiet of the superficial soul. We found that to the first nothing is real, because he himself is not genuine. We found that to the second nothing matters, because he does not understand what is below the surface of life. It remains now to discuss another class, which has escaped but by a higher path the turmoil and anguish which keep certain earnest natures in constant conflict. These earnest souls, as we have seen, have had a glimpse of the heaven possible on earth. They have felt and confessed the claims of duty. They have entered upon the heroic labor of self-conquest. They have felt the anguish of the creation, groaning with it under its burden. It is the struggle of these that we have set over against the cynic's calm and the fool's vacancy.

But who are these who are neither cynical nor foolish, but who seem not to feel as others the spasm of inward vexation, nor are tossed on the constant upheaval of moral passion which feels itself helpless to relieve the cause of its pain? They are not troubled souls in the sense we have been considering. They constitute the third class we promised to consider.

3. These have conquered a peace, and hold themselves to life's duty with a steady hand. Long ago this class of believers made the discovery that the spiritual sphere is real. To them the divine Presence is a conscious experience, and they dwell in the midst of the certainties which appear to the man "alive unto God." Long ago they determined to climb any

height from which there was promise of a wide view. Long ago they determined to descend into any deep of experience where might lie the treasures of wisdom and divine knowledge. Therefore, now they stand amid the vexations, uncertainties, and inequalities of our common life, as the rock stands, though all the sea is beaten into foam about its base. These are not wanting in feeling: they have the deepest feeling. They are not untouched by what concerns their human brothers; they are not driven to despair because they hold firmly by a few well-established facts of experience. They are in the best sense believers: "Great peace have they that love Thy law, and nothing shall cause them to stumble. . . . Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee." Thus through the centuries have such souls been described. This is the man of faith, as distinguished from the man of flesh and the man of this age. I do not propose to describe the perfect man or the mature saint. But I desire to designate the only class from which the saintly and matured experience can arise. Of the cynic nothing perfect can come. Of the superficial nothing perfect can come, not even perfect polish. But I ask you to contemplate the soul stuff out of which the kingdom of heaven on earth is built up. These souls have had their struggle: they are now at work upon the field they have conquered.

What are the characteristics of such victors, and what are the discoveries that they have made? First Discovery: Nothing saves a man but strength of soul, growing out of struggle of soul. Whether the man is

pressed upon by the woe of the world or by the needs of his own nature or by the perplexities of speculative thought,—no matter what urges him, from the moment he is aroused in the very depths of his being, there are but two paths open to him. The one leads to life by struggle, and the other leads to destruction by the abandonment of struggle. He settles it then and there that he can find no cross-country short cut from one of these to the other. The first must be followed wherever it may lead: the other can lead but to one end,—the disintegration of character and the collapse of moral power. This is the soul's first discovery,—that work is the price of ease, that struggle is the price of victory, that pain is the price of comfort. And he accepts the terms the higher life proposes.

Second Discovery: But he learns another lesson concerning the temper in which this method of life is to be carried forward. He is not to seek ease or anticipate victory or long for comfort. He has but one concern,—to address himself to his work with a perfect fidelity, to wage his battle with an unimpeachable loyalty, to bear his pain without rebellion, knowing that no more can be expected of him than this, whatever may be the outcome, he must keep the faith and covenant with his own nature to be true. It may be said that this is expecting a great deal of one's self. I think it is expecting the very least consistent with a sense of life's real and deep significance. It is all that one can count on. He cannot tell how his work will result; he cannot tell whether the victory will be worth having when it is won. He



does not even know whether the comfort he will have will be permanent, or prove the prelude to new pain. He can know none of these things. All he knows is the momentary pressure and the instant struggle which engages him, and he has the right to expect of himself an absolute sincerity. Until this is achieved nothing is accomplished. Nor is he to be concerned as to the relation which his struggle bears to the lives of other men. There is much false philosophy taught concerning the good which comes to the worker by the work he does for others. For others we must work, but not until we can achieve something of triumph on the same ground for ourselves. We cannot feed the hunger of another soul when we are ourselves starving. We cannot devise liberally for another out of the meanness and narrowness of our own poverty-stricken nature. To give, a man must have something to bestow. The man who is not sure of himself is a poor support to another's insecurity. He cannot confirm any man's faith by rehearsing his own doubts. But he may relieve another's despair by the victorious tone of a spirit which hopes in spite of doubt. This victorious tone is the true note of perfect sincerity. This is the covenant the soul makes with itself, and upon the way this covenant is kept will depend the calm strength of a future resistance.

But sincerity is not all that this class we are considering find as the ground of their confidence. This sincerity may be as clear of all mixed motive as it is possible to conceive, but there must be the ordering of life's conduct to the guidance of principles free from the peradventure and caprice of circumstances

or inclination. The discovery of the reign of law made by modern science was long ago affirmed by the students of the soul's true life. Life cannot be pieced together. It is not a mosaic, but a creation. If we could test its first rising, "behold its thought afar off," we would in that germinal moral impulse discover "the promise and potency" of all that is to be. This power to discover the laws which control life is given to the man whose heart is set upon reality. The cynic will miss it as surely as the superficial and indifferent. The old condition still holds good, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." We sometimes think we will walk surely if we trust serenely to our aspirations and faithfully heed the prophecy of our inmost spirit. Aspiration, indeed, keeps the head lifted and the affections ready for their upward flight. But the laws of life come to experience by constant experiment. The secret is not revealed to us in our dreams.

The Prince of Mystics said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets. I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." It is thus always in the orderly development of a true revelation: the prophet stands on immutable law while he tells his vision. To the end of time it shall be the law and the prophet—restraint and aspiration—which shall constitute the centripetal and centrifugal forces which hold sound life to its appointed orbit,—true to its course, but true also to its centre. Much power is wasted by forgetting that principles are the stuff that life is made of. We vainly try to match the edges of our moral conduct. We try to be consistent, when,

if we had once for all entered into an alliance with some law of life, each day thereafter, each word and deed and thought would find its place obedient to this regnant law. For instance, the law of kindness is large enough to include all the acts of the soul it penetrates and influences; but he who is kind upon occasion will see the occasion sometimes arrive, and find it difficult to adjust himself to it. The law that all intellectual growth depends upon the complete emancipation of the mind is a far better dependence than any fixed resolution to think aright upon all questions as they arise. The absolute confidence that no truth can be inconsistent with any other truth is a better ground of trust than the effort to discover piecemeal what absolute truth is. So, with all the contending, disturbing processes of thought and feeling which are sure to fill with trouble and struggle the life of the man who is watching circumstances, situations, and occasions, all these find their place to him who has discovered a principle of action,—a principle which his reason approves, history vindicates, and to which his affections can make a pure consecration of the best that is in him.

The vexed souls of the uncertain stand amazed before this simple-minded Man, who honors with his obedience the immutable laws of moral life. "My peace give I unto you," says this Man. Yes, as an example, a vindication, a demonstration, but in no such way as the indolent hope to receive it. It is given in the only useful sense, when it is proven possible. "The possible always is," says Martineau, however long it may be before it appears as actual.

Because the possible always is, therefore "the whole creation groaneth and waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." The natural world never groans for the impossible: that folly is left to the unnatural, the abnormal man. "When he shall appear, we shall be like him," says the peaceful soul of the first century. When we are like him, he will appear, answers the confident hope of the century now passing. Between these two and uniting them stretches the age of effort to realize the second advent.

I have now pointed out what I conceive to be the three characteristics of the strong, quiet soul: (1) a dedication of the whole nature to an honorable struggle; (2) a sincerity that is like white light in showing forth reality; (3) a determined reference of obscure and vexing problems to the laws of life, so that incidents of experience become the commentary upon the principles which are the groundwork of character. Those who have these characteristics are the only ones who have a reason or the power to stand calm and strong before those who are still struggling with the woe of the world.

These quiet souls have found the solution of some of the questions, and have discovered the method by which others may be solved. That which engages them now is creation,—a higher task than the untangling of life's intricacies. To them all things are not an open question: some things have passed from question to assured conviction. But even for these the quiet is only comparative. If we ask, Are there any who are utterly free from all disturbance and moral passion? the answer must be, None utterly free ex-

cept the cynic and the fool. To the freest the sword never sleeps in its scabbard: it never becomes so much an emblem of victory as to cease to be an instrument of conquest. From the days of "the Friend of God" to the days of the "Son of God," from days of Moses, who cast from him the laws of the stone tables and broke them at sight of the apostasy of God's people, to the days of Jesus of Nazareth, who was driven into the wilderness by the spirit, and must re-enforce his courage by the remembrance of his sacred hours, and from his days until this hour, all earnest natures "alive unto God" must carry forward the plain of moral effort to a new point of conquest. Each in his turn must widen the skirts of light. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," must be the motto of his children in a world as yet incomplete.

One man struggles to believe in a revolting Deity against every noble instinct of his nature. The man beside him is beyond that necessity: his nobler nature has conquered his fears, and he is free from this image of Infinite Malevolence. He is persuaded that no such malignant sway rules the world. But the second man is only relatively free. He also has his problem; namely, to bring his nature to worship the better Being his intellect has approved. If he misses this, if he cannot surrender his whole nature to the nobler Deity, he has small reason to regard with pity his less enlightened brother, who is nobly striving to love and worship as God a Being made unlovely by his disguise of theologic rags. After all, it is the struggle of soul that saves. One man may be struggling to

surrender a sin he loves. It cleaves to him: it would seem necessary for him to shear away half his being before he is delivered from this body of death. Another man, beside this first, has conquered thus far: no such conflict engages him. But he has not been able to regenerate his imagination, and cleanse the blood which feeds his brain. He is struggling with his inheritance in his flesh. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: . . . he cannot do the things that he would." But that "he would" do them is a great victory in itself: the other half of his victory will be won later. His flesh shall go the way his will points the path. He shall declare, "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." The standard of his victory is moved further afield.

So, also, that deepest sorrow of all,—the helplessness we feel when standing before want and sickness and suffering, as any man may see them if he is not utterly blinded by his selfishness. We try to realize it, carry it out of the lives of men; but its weight is too great, our strength is in no way equal to the burden. We despair of ever staying the dread contagion of want and its attendant wickedness. And yet there stands one beside us, and in presence of this same scene which is such a trouble to us; and this second looker-on seems not so desperately moved at what he sees. Is he indifferent? By no means. His faith is larger; he believes that God is health and sanity and blessedness; he feels confident that God will pour his life yet more and more into these drought-dry and desert places of the world. And,

believing God, he does not for a moment relax his hold upon the task set him; but he labors, looking up. He does not "sorrow as those who have no hope."

Surely there is fine work to be done by those who will be "laborers together with God." It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do. It is not true that any earnest and religious man works alone. How can one work alone in a universe which God fills? From that first struggle within humanity, out of which the moral sense arises, to that finest revelation of God as love, which is the hope of the world, there is one palpitating Creative Energy carrying forward the triumphs of the truth. Let us jealously covet some share in the purpose of great souls and their great Ally!







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THE REDEMPTION OF THE  
BODY

BY

THEODORE C. WILLIAMS

Minister of All Souls Church, New York

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## THE REDEMPTION OF THE BODY.

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“Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”—ROM. viii. 23.

THIS eighth chapter of Romans is one of the most sublime passages in the Bible. The struggle of thought is too powerful for the language to express. It bears every mark of being the utterance of a great soul, in a great spiritual crisis. As we read its heroic strain, we have the satisfaction of knowing that it was no theory or ideal merely, but the living creed of a man who was at that moment exposed to all manner of trial and persecution, and who not long after sacrificed his life to his faith. It has to an eminent degree this secret of the Bible's power, that it is the living faith of a living man. The writer has not said, “Let us now express a beautiful moral idea.” He says: “See, my brothers, I have struggled, I have conquered; and this was the faith that made me strong, and which I shall trust in till I die.”

Let us try to discover the apostle's meaning in this chapter, and then in the text. He has been speaking of the spirit and the flesh, of man's spirit and man's flesh as contrasted, as antagonistic, the one being the life of life, the other bearing in it a law of death. Whatever is only of the flesh shall fail: what is of

the spirit is full of joy and eternity. The life of the spirit is a divine life, and they who share it are called the sons of God.

But this scene of conflict in man's own being, of life with death, of the perishable with the eternal, of the earthly and the divine, carries his thought forward to a wider range. This contrast between flesh and spirit is contemplated as the law of the whole universe. There is a material and a spiritual creation. The apostle sees man and man's nature as the crowning wonder of the whole creation. But in him begins a new and higher order of being. The old creation was in the "bondage of corruption": it was "made subject to vanity"; *i.e.*, it consisted of perishable things. But this perishable creation is always groaning and aspiring for something higher. All the things of time are prophetic and partial. The new creation in Christ fulfils the hope of all nature, and is the "divine event" to which the whole creation has hitherto been moving.

And every man to whom Paul speaks, he himself also, belongs to both these orders of being,—to the old order which is carnal and perishable, to the new which is spiritual and eternal.

The spiritual creation is yet unfinished. We have only the "first-fruits" of it. As all nature for so many ages has been "groaning and travailing," even so "we ourselves groan within ourselves." Our spiritual life (and this he says of men who have touched the living hands of Christ) is only beginning. We are saved by hope. We stand only on the threshold of the temple of God. Yet this life of the spirit

has the victory already. "All things work together" for its good. It will go on forever. It is the will of God, it is the love of God; and neither by "height nor depth," nor by any future creation, shall we be separated from it.

With this outline of his thought before us, we shall see more clearly what each expression in this wonderful chapter means. The first principle, as you see, is, that in the spiritual man a life begins which may be regarded as a new order of creation. The creature of God becomes the child of God. Bondage has become liberty. What was dead now lives.

Our wider knowledge of the universe illustrates and confirms the apostle's thought. It is easy to see that with man a new principle enters the world. Between the animal and the human there is an uncrossed gulf, like that between a crystal and a plant. There are elements common to both, but the higher form is really a new creation. The principle of evolution affirms that there is a passage across the gulf. But the bridge has long been lost.

Nature divides species from species as clearly as star from star. Whatever the origin and process may be, the final result is separated orders of life. Here and there are species close of kin, but the consenting testimony is that nature is divided by great planes into lower and higher. From lifeless to living, from animal to human, from human to spiritual, these mighty gradations, though parts of one providential scheme, are none the less so sharply distinct that they may well be termed so many separated creations of God.

This general view of the world corresponds to all intents and purposes with the apostle's. He has not seen the view in detail. But it is his ruling thought that a new manhood, a new and spiritual creation, is brought into the world by Jesus and the "spirit of life" in him. The physiologist, whose classification concerns only the visible man, may be unwilling to admit any new species of humanity. But, surely, our apostle, who is speaking of human nature only from a moral and religious point of view, uses no extravagant language when he affirms that the manhood of the Christian order is a new creation. He distinguishes them as natural and spiritual, the earthly and the heavenly, the merely human and the human quickened by the spirit of God. He is continually comparing them. The "old man" is ruled by fear, the new man by love. The old man is dark, violent, and centred upon self: the new is full of light and peace, and lives unto himself no more. The natural humanity lives by the senses only: our spiritual humanity sees the things which are unseen and eternal. Here is a transformation as radical as the change from instinct to reason, or from appetite to conscience. It is a new man in a new world.

The next great principle in this chapter, is that the natural and spiritual belong to the same divine order. The "whole creation groans and travails together, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." Nature is man's friend. The lower orders of creation are made to prepare the way for the higher orders. Great as is the antagonism between nature and spirit, they are in reality allies. What comes before the

highest development of humanity is not evil, but imperfect, not under the divine curse, but working toward a divinely ordered result.

Does not our exactest science confirm this prophetic insight? The planet's surface has been for countless ages preparing for its present use. Very slowly the rocky globe was clothed with life, its mephitic atmosphere cleansed, its swampy plains drained dry, till some habitation was ready for human life. Then the rude beginnings of man strive forward to the spiritual creation. Earth and river, mountain and sea, have been the instructors and upbuilders of the human soul. Nature's violence makes man brave. Her sternness and frugality make him a worker and a thinker. Even want and famine, enforced by frugal Nature upon her pensioners, have driven man outward from the isolation of the family or tribe into some large, national brotherhood, where he learns the impotence of self-dependence, and glows with heroism, self-sacrifice, and generous joy.

Man's whole nature, even that part of it which we derive from the brute, has ever pointed upward to the spirit. The very violence of his passions will urge him on to government and spirituality. All his appetites are constructive: only, like all elemental forces, they must be rightly guided and applied. Just as the heads of fossil beast or bird are rude fore-runners of a human countenance, so the primeval instincts of humanity are prophetic of the highest life which shall befall the human soul.

Now, when Paul has set forth what this life of the spiritual man is, and how it is the crowning of the



world's history, a new question — I may say a mis-giving — arises in him. The question is this, When is redemption finished? It is no speculative question, but one springing from the depths of the apostle's heart and life. Surely, if any man ever gave himself utterly to a heavenly vision, Paul had done so. He had left all, and followed Christ. Outwardly, he had thrown himself into the work of his apostleship; and, inwardly, he was filled with divine zeal and charity, which he calls variously "the Spirit," or "the spirit of life in Christ," or the "grace" of God. What that inner life was we may faintly imagine when we remember that these mighty epistles are but glowing incidents, mere overflowing fires from that burning soul.

Yet Paul has made that solemn confession,—the saintly lamentation which ever since has given courage to so many struggling souls, though feebler and less pure than his: "I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind." Then, looking away from himself, he sees the Church—the Roman and the Corinthian Churches—so full of sin. He sees so many Christians, undoubtedly sincere, undoubtedly belonging to the new kingdom of Christ, yet, alas! so full of strife, envying, folly, and weakness. What wonder, then, that the question rises: When is the spiritual creation perfected? When is our redemption accomplished? To this he gives only one answer, and that a plain one. That all growth is slow. The law of

slow growth (which we saw moving up through the lower creation, till the creature "of the earth, earthy," becomes the "son of God") prevails also in the spiritual creation. We have only the first-fruits of the Spirit. We are saved by hope. We know only in part. We pass from glory to glory, from faith to faith; and, therefore, we are still in the attitude of patient waiting.

This idea of slow and difficult spiritual progress is never absent from a living Christianity. It is expressed with peculiar clearness and force in the text. "We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption,"—that was a modest word, was it not?—for those who in the name of Christ had worked miracles, dared and suffered all things, whom half the Church worships as supernaturally sanctified. "Waiting for the redemption of the body"! See now what this implies.

Translating Paul's thought into our own words, it means that to his higher life his body is an obstacle. All the habits of an evil past are still continued there, while his spiritual nature has freed itself. A body is partly an automaton. After it is set moving a certain way, it goes on that way. Every action of the human will tends to become a habit. The body and brain of man are bundles of habits. The mind and soul originate action and progress. But the body is conservative. We see this most clearly in the case of sinful appetites. We know that the reformed drunkard must still pray God for strength against his besetting sin. The conservatism of the body is just as real in the case of more refined and delicate sins.

The brain-cells that have been made the instruments of pride, selfishness, and evil-speaking, tend to repeat such thoughts over and over. Mental habits and habits of feeling are all associated with the action of nerve and brain. Therefore, the thoroughly repentant, the truly Christian soul, may find itself plagued with such old thoughts and feelings as it would no longer willingly harbor. It is the body which does this. It is the poor, faithful body, which, like a dumb beast, is just going on with the tricks that have been taught it.

When the apostle says, we hope for the redemption of the body from such slavery, he simply means that the spiritual life will finally make the natural life its ally. The members that were servants to sin will become, as willingly, the servants of righteousness. In the body itself is nothing either good or evil. It is the obedient instrument of the soul; and, therefore, the spiritual man may redeem his body and brain to the uses of the spirit. What was all natural becomes all spiritual. What was lawless is set in order. The violent become strong. Weakness becomes obedience, and what was mere unrest, becomes action and overflowing life.

While yet we have only the first-fruits of the Spirit, all this has not come to pass. The earliest work of the Holy Spirit is in the inner places of the soul. The candle is under a bushel. The kingdom has not come, nor the word been made flesh. When the heart returns to God, when love and faith have possessed the inner man, there is still somewhat to wait for. The stronghold of selfishness may be de-

stroyed, but the old enemy still lives in the outer places of his strength. For it is the Christian idea that progress is from within outward. We cleanse first the inside of the cup and platter. We do not begin spiritual progress by a reformation of the habits, but by an inward change of spiritual direction, a change of desire, a holier love, a deeper faith in God; and, then, the water of life goes abroad like a stream from the hills to make the valleys green. The changed conduct is the after-effect of a changed heart and life. Who that knows human nature, who that has known himself, can doubt that this is the true course of spiritual growth? Everything human begins within the soul.

But, because there is a "redemption of the body," these first effects of spiritual life, which are within, are ever moving on to possess the outward man as well. The life of the spirit is not a going out of the body, but a spiritualizing of the body. The Christian does not withdraw himself from the world: he overcomes the world. The spiritual does not destroy the natural: it harmonizes and transfigures it.

Many people think of spirituality as something sickly and pale. But true faith is a principle of life. It is living water, it is manna and wine, and is requisite and necessary as well for the body as for the soul. No doubt it is a wholesome reaction against the old, sickly view of religion that so many people at the present day are boldly preaching that Christian faith is a kind of medicine, and sickness a form of sin. Think what life would be, were there no longer any obstacle in the flesh, but only a helper of the

higher life. And it will be so. Even the unspiritual man knows how his physical frame responds to the impulse of the soul. When his pride is insulted, he is faint with mortification, or hot with rage. When terror seizes him, his face blanches, and he feels his heart sink. When about to grasp some longed for good, he feels his blood come and go in his pulses. Much more when his body is servant of righteousness, will it thrill with and emphasize every movement of goodness. Courage will give him tranquil nerves, and put energy into his perceptions. Sympathy makes him feel another's pain as if his own. He will shrink as instinctively from moral baseness as now from contagion or stain.

It is a distinct gain in religion to call health holy. The gospel story shows very plainly that faith, hope, love, and joy in a man's soul are directly curative of bodily disease. The Christian Church has always believed so, and it is a good thing to reaffirm this line of truth. But people who with a frivolous habit of wonder put the emphasis on miracles of healing, either ancient or modern, are apt to miss a graver truth, the greater marvel which underlies the Christian teaching as to the redemption of the flesh by the spirit.

The redemption of the body, as Saint Paul means it, is accomplished when it becomes the willing servant of righteousness.

How often, when high thoughts and purposes are present with us, our feelings are dull and cold, and our will sternly drives a lagging pulse to a deed we ought to spring to with joy! It is because our physical powers are not a match for the spiritual. The

body is not redeemed. But we have hints even now of that victorious condition when the spirit of man shall master its domain. Then the brain will glow for truth, and the heart for love; the hand will spring to the act of justice or mercy as passionately as it now obeys the motions of hunger and thirst. Then courage will know no shrinking, and purity no temptation, and justice no delay. The inner life of aspiration will find free course and expression, because the whole man, the physical and spiritual, will be full of the spirit of God. So sings one of Browning's sages: —

“Let us not always say,  
 ‘*Spite* of this flesh, to-day  
 I strove, made head, gained ground, upon the whole!’  
 As the bird sings and wings,  
 Let us cry, ‘All good things  
 Are ours; nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh  
 helps soul!’”

*Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

See, then, how this hope of the apostle's, grounded so deeply in his vast thought of God's method of creation, brings us back to the clearest facts of our moral experience. Our every act and thought leaves written in our very flesh its permanent memorial. God needs no recording angel with book of fate to chronicle our lives. They are registered by a far more unerring plan in the very dust of which we are made. Every sinful choice, though consummated in some flashing instant of time, has left its mark in some tendency, some weakness, which is stereotyped in our brains, though by the grace of God it may

remain only as a warning to keep us from a second fall.

When we realize in thought this sensitiveness, this transparency of flesh to spirit, is it not pitiful that Christians have dared despise the life of the body, as if it had no part in the work of God? Let us return to the larger, deeper thought of redemption, which is not just saving a man's soul, but bringing his whole nature into a divine order of life. If, then, we groan within ourselves because our nature is divided, because conflict is the law of our being, let us ask ourselves this question, What would life be worth if it were otherwise? Would you like to grow into righteousness as the rose to beauty, and have no part in your own creation? I know you would not. You would rather join with God in his greatest work,—the fashioning of a soul. Is anything on earth more interesting, more wonderful, than to see the successive conquests of the spirit of Christ in a redeemed man, to see the transfiguration of every power till there is nothing in his life, which his highest purpose and faith fail to touch?

And out of redeemed men God is making a redeemed world,—a world in which there shall be no more curse, a world which is growing better every day.

Have you and I this hope in us? Are we expecting the larger redemption? Is our religion a sentiment? Is our higher life of spiritual aspiration a mere vision for a holy hour, or is it a force in our lives, spreading itself and deepening in our natures, till it shall possess us altogether? What a hope this is! What a joy and glory is this vision of the apostle

that nothing is common or unclean! that, as in Peter's vision of the many beasts let down from heaven and received up again, the life descending from above has power to draw upward again all earthly elements, all base, brutish things, and so redeem and glorify all!

Then will our true humanity be fulfilled when the divided creation of God is joined together. The spiritual and the natural will be one, and the body will have its rightful use as the servant and revealer of the soul. God has made two worlds,—a material and a spiritual. They revolve in separate orbits with perpetual jar, perturbations, and eclipse; but in the end their orbits become the same, and they move around the Sun of Righteousness, singing the same celestial song to the glory of God. Let us all be sure that every faithful day, every self-conquest, every deed of loving service, will not only bring order to our souls, but will bring our whole being—body, mind, and spirit—into the harmony of the divine creation.







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